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THE
SONG OF SONGS:

WITH A
COMMENTARY, NOTES,

&c. &c.

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R. B. B. B.
THE
SONG OF SONGS,

WHICH IS BY

SOLOMON.

A NEW TRANSLATION:

WITH

A COMMENTARY AND NOTES.

BY T. WILLIAMS,
AUTHOR OF THE AGE OF INFIDELITY, &c.

—Procul, O procul este profani!
VIRGIL.
—Far hence be souls profane!
DRYDEN.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM W. WOODWARD,
Nº. 52, south Second, corner of Chesnut-street.

1803.

PREFACE.

THE following work originated in a serious enquiry, whether this book be a genuine part of the holy scriptures; and if so, how it should be explained, that it may become 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' The process and result of these enquiries are now before the public, who will judge of the evidence which fully satisfied the author. To those who have never doubted, such a chain of argumentation may appear unnecessary; and to others who read only for pious improvement and reflection the discussion may appear dry and uninteresting. Such should recollect, however, that some attention is due, both to the scruples of their brethren, and to the objections of unbelievers: that the temple of gospel truth, like that of old, has its steps, which must be gradually ascended, before we can behold its higher mysteries.

The account given in the Introductory Essay, of the plan and hypothesis I have adopted, makes it unnecessary to detail them in this place. The poem is divided into sections, allotting two to each of the seven days of the marriage festival^a, commencing the morning after the celebration;

^a See page 73.

PREFACE.

though I must confess myself far from sanguine in the propriety of these divisions, chiefly from not knowing how to dispose of the Sabbath, which must have been one day in the seven, though it is doubtful which should be assigned to it.

In elucidating the poetical imagery I have made considerable use of the eastern writers, availing myself of the learned researches of Sir W. JONES, and others. In the latter part of the work I have also adopted some ideas, and controverted others, of the EDITOR OF CALMET, whose translation appeared before several of my last sheets were printed off.

Two things in this undertaking may seem to require apology, the boldness of the attempt, and the length of time it has been in hand: but these circumstances counterpoise each other; and the former will be a sufficient excuse for the latter, especially to those acquainted with the author's other avocations. The work is at length before the public with all its imperfections. If the reader will throw a mantle of candour over them, I hope he will find many things to assist his enquiries, and to lead his contemplations to that object which alone claims unqualified admiration—‘THE ALTOGETHER LOVELY.’

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Introductory Essays.

ESSAY I.

ON THE

ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE,

PARTICULARLY OF

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND ALLEGORY:

AND OF THE

HEBREW POETRY AND MUSIC.

MANY learned men have complained of the poverty of the Hebrew language, occasioned by the paucity of its primitive words, or roots: from this, however, arises the frequent use of figurative terms, one of the chief beauties of language, and an essential (perhaps the most essential) ingredient of poetic composition.—The discussion of this subject, therefore, naturally carries us back to the origin of language, and of metaphorical expression.

SECTION I.

OF THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE, &c.

THE *origin of language* is a problem which has exercised the greatest wits and the ablest scholars; and, perhaps, no one has solved it better than our justly celebrated MILTON, who makes the father of mankind thus express himself, on his first sensation of existence:

——‘ To speak I try’d, and forthwith spake,
 ‘ My tongue obey’d and readily could name
 ‘ Whate’er I saw¹.

This supposes that Adam received the rudiments of language at the same time with his perceptions and understanding, and from the same hand². I say the *rudiments of language*, because I conceive our first parent was not formed for idleness, but for exertion and improvement: to cultivate, not only his garden, but his mind; and to enlarge and improve, by reflection and experiment, every branch of knowledge with which he

¹ Par. Lost, Book viii.

² The learned Dr. Leland agrees perfectly with this idea: ‘ From the account given by Moses of the primeval state of man, it appears that he was not left to acquire ideas in the ordinary way, which would have been too tedious and slow as he was circumstanced; but was *at once* furnished with the knowledge which was *then* necessary for him. He was *immediately endued with the gift of language*, which necessarily supposes, that he was furnished with a stock of ideas, a specimen of which he gave in giving names to the inferior animals, which were brought before him, for that purpose.’—*Advan. and Necess. of the Christian Revelation*, vol. II. b. ii. ch. 2.

was originally endowed, and, among others, that of language.

That the first principles of language were few and simple, will be readily admitted. It is probable that the primitive words were all monosyllables¹, each at first expressing one simple idea²; but afterwards compounded into various grammatical forms, and their meaning enlarged and varied by their application to different objects.

¹ Shuckford's *Connect.* vol. 1. p. 119, 20. 2d. ed.

² An ingenious French writer (Mons. *Bergier*) some years since planned a *Dictionary of the Elements of Language*, by which he means those simple monosyllables of which the primitive language consisted, and from which all languages are formed. He supposes these primitive roots might not be more than two hundred, and from the specimen given in one (viz. אב, ab, eb, ib, ob, ub) these seem abundantly sufficient. See *Mon. Rev.* 1764, p. 504, &c.—The Chinese language is at present in this state, Containing between three and four hundred primitive monosyllables, which are varied by accent and pronunciation, as I am informed, to the number of about eighty thousand, even without the variety resulting in other languages from declensions and conjugations, &c. Mr. *Blackwell* thinks the Egyptian and most of the northern tongues were also composed at first of monosyllables (Enq. into the life, &c. of Homer, p. 41. n.) That this was the case with the Hebrew I cannot doubt. The primitive roots were, I conceive, at first formed of two radicals only, as אב, אד, &c. to these, in the further improvement of the language, I suppose the final ה was added and formed אבה, אלה, &c. Then the participial letter ו was inserted as in איוב, אול, &c. The transposition of the radicals would form another source of variety, as אהב, אהל: and lastly, roots were compounded by borrowing a third radical from other roots, or incorporating a servile, &c. This subject is curious, but I will give only one or two examples: אב is to swell: אבה to desire: אהב to love: אהז (changing ב for ו) to desire; all originally one root: א itself is often accessory; so I conceive אבך from בכ: אבל from בל: but the subject of compound verbs is too extensive and conjectural for discussion here.

I have supposed that the first principles of language and science were received by *intuition*, The case of the first man differed materially from that of his descendants. Coming into the world infants, and having parents to instruct us, innate ideas and instinctive knowledge are not necessary for *us*; but without these Adam would have been a child at man's estate, which is the exact character of an idiot. Besides, as it appears, the whole creation was formed in a state of maturity, the leaves in full growth, and the fruits ripe—analogy leads us to suppose the same of man.

All our ideas are admitted by the senses, and consequently refer, in the first place, to external objects; but no sooner are we convinced that we possess an immaterial soul or spirit, than we find occasion for other terms, or, in the want of them, another application of the same terms to a different class of objects; and hence arises the first and principal source of metaphorical expression.

Thus *ruach*¹, the term at first used for *air*, or wind, is applied to spirit; and *nephesb*², breath, to the human soul. *Shemaim*³ signifies both the visible heavens, and the immediate residence of Deity; and *shecol*⁴ is variously applied to the grave—the unseen world, in general—and to the state of future punishment.

One of the most considerable uses Adam had for language, must have been in naming the crea-

¹ רוח² נפש³ שמים⁴ השכל

tures, of which Moses gives a short, but emphatical account. ‘The Lord God had formed every ‘beast of the field, and every bird of the air, and ‘brought them unto Adam, to see what he would ‘call them; and whatsoever Adam called every ‘living creature, that was the name thereof.’ It is idle to enquire how they were brought: he that made them was able to bring them within the sphere of Adam’s observation: and I think the names given abundantly prove that he had time and opportunity to hear their natural cries, and to observe their characters, which could hardly be the work of an hour, or a day. I have supposed that he heard their natural cries, because it is generally allowed that several of the Hebrew names, both of beasts and birds, are formed by *onomatopœia*. So the sparrow is called *tsippor*² from its chirping, the raven *gnoreb*³ (or *oreb*) from its croaking, and the ass by the two different names of *gnarod*⁴ (or *gnorud*) and *pray*⁵ from its braying. Instances of a like nature occur in other languages, as the *cuckoo* with us, and the *sookoo* of the south seas.

The far greater part of the names, however, applied to animals in Hebrew, appear to be derived from their characteristic qualities: as for

¹ Gen. ii. 19.

² צפור

³ ערב

⁴ ערד

⁵ פרא

N. B. In deriving names by *onomatopœia*, the points in Hebrew must often be disregarded.

Instance, the camel is called *gamel*¹ from its revengeful temper, and the sheep *rachel*² from its meekness: the kite *daab*³ from its remarkable method of flying, or sailing in the air, and the hawk *raeb*⁴ from the proverbial quickness of its sight.

This subject is so curious and entertaining that I could with pleasure pursue it; but I have been already carried into a digression from my design, which was to shew how man came at first by his ideas and words, and particularly the origin of figurative terms.

We have observed that all our ideas at first enter by the senses,⁵ and that the terms applied to spiritual objects are borrowed originally from natural ones. So the verb *raab*⁶ signifies, first, to see, and secondly, to understand, or to experience. Thus Solomon: "My heart had great *experience* [had *seen* much] of wisdom and knowledge⁷. So *ain*⁸ [literally, the *reflector*] is used as well for the *eye* of the mind as of the body⁹. The verb to *bear* signifies also to hearken, and to obey; and to *taste*, or *feel*, means frequently to experience; and these terms are so applied, not only in Hebrew, but also in our own and other languages.

¹ גמל² רחל³ דאב⁴ ראב.

⁵ See this demonstrated in the case of persons born *blind* in a little pamphlet entitled, 'the Principles of Atheism proved to be unfounded.' 8vo. 1796.

⁶ ראב⁷ Eccles. i. 16.⁸ עין from ענה to reflect. (*Parkhurst.*)

⁹ See Gen. xvi. 6. Deut. xvi. 19. 1 Sam. xv. 17.
2 Sam. vi. 22. &c.

Once more, from a verb signifying to *feed*, is derived the name of a *shepherd*; and because the office of a shepherd is the proper emblem of a good prince, kings are called *shepherds*, and their subjects are compared to sheep; though perhaps it should be taken into the account, that in the ages of pastoral simplicity the offices were sometimes united: so the Egyptians reckon among their early monarchs, a race of *shepherd kings*. From this honourable application of the term, it was carried still higher, even to him who was the *Prince* and *Shepherd* of the house of Israel.

So closely, in the present state, are our ideas connected with material objects, that we cannot define even the Supreme Spirit, but by a term borrowed from the material air, or breath; and he who “ knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust,” has himself condescended to teach us this language, and to describe himself in terms accommodated to our confined notions; for it would be as impossible for our minds to comprehend the nature and properties of pure spirit, as for our mortal eyes to support the blaze of uncreated glory.

And as our ideas are very confined, so it is natural to suppose, that the first language must consist of few, and simple terms. This is another source of metaphorical expression, for it was much easier, and more natural, to apply the same terms in a figurative way, to different objects, and ideas in some respects similar, than to invent new ones. This we find to be the fact among rude and un-

civilized nations in our own time. When Omiah, from Otaheite, was first introduced to Lord Sandwich, in order to distinguish the company present, he pointed first to the butler, and called him “king of the bottles”—Capt. Furneaux, “king of the ships”—and Lord Sandwich, “king of *all* the ships.”

Something like this appears to have been the case with the antient Hebrews, and accounts for many of their idioms. Thus they variously apply the term *Baal*, signifying Lord, or Master. A *master of arrows*¹ is a skilful archer—a *master of dreams*², a remarkable dreamer—a *master of the tongue*³, a great talker—a *master of contrivances*, a cunning fellow⁴—and a bird swift of flight, *a master of the wing*⁵. In like manner they apply the term *ben*, a son, to a great variety of objects. An arrow is the *son of the bow*—a spark, the *son of a coal*—and a vine branch, the *daughter of the vine*⁶. An animal a year old, is the *son of a year*⁷—a man deserving punishment, *a son of stripes*⁸—and so in a variety of other forms.

Dr. BLAIR remarks, ‘We are apt, upon a superficial view, to imagine that figures of speech are among the chief refinements of language—devised by orators and rhetoricians. The contrary of this is the truth. Mankind never employed so many figures of speech as when they had hardly any words;’ and this seems the true

¹ Gen. xlix. 23.

² Eccles. x. 11.

³ Prov. i. 17.

⁴ Exod. xii. 5.

⁵ Gen. xxxvii. 19.

⁶ Prov. xxviii. 8.

⁷ Gen. xlix. 22.

⁸ Deut. xxv. 2.

reason why all barbarian or inartificial tongues abound in the use of metaphors; many of them conducting their common 'public transactions' with bolder metaphors, and greater pomp of style, than we use in our poetical productions¹.

That figures, properly employed, give great force and beauty to composition, will not be controverted; yet we see they originated in the paucity of words, and the poverty of language: so Providence has ordained in this mixed state of things; beauties often arise out of defects; as the rudest objects in nature furnish the most interesting views.

It is natural to suppose, that mankind would early discover this circumstance, and soon employ figurative terms, as well from choice as from necessity; to give life and spirit to their conversations, and especially to their set speeches and compositions.

Mr. *Blackwell* observes, 'that the Turks, Arabs, Indians, and, in general, most of the inhabitants of the east, are a solitary kind of people, they speak but seldom, and never long without emotion: but when, in their own phrase, they *open their mouths*, and give loose to a fiery imagination, they are poetical, and full of metaphor. Speaking, among such people, is a matter of some moment, as we may gather from their usual introductions; for before they begin to deliver their thoughts, they give notice that they will *open their mouth*, that they will *unloose their tongue*, that they will utter

¹ Blair's Lect. vi. vol. I.

' *their voice and pronounce with their lips*. These preambles bear a great resemblance (adds this learned writer) to the old forms of introduction in Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus, in which they are sometimes followed by Virgil'. I may subjoin, that they are the very expressions adopted by the sacred writers.

Another source of figures, which I shall mention, is the use of *picture-writing* and *hieroglyphics*. Bishop WARBURTON has largely shewn², that picture writing was the first method of recording public events: to this succeeded hieroglyphics, which were an abridgment of the former method; and these were followed by the arbitrary characters of literal writing, which were most probably abridged from hieroglyphics.

These ideas are not merely conjectural. When the Spaniards invaded South America, the inhabitants sent expresses to Montezuma, in paintings upon cloth; and *Purchase* gives the copy of a Mexican picture, which contains the history of an ancient Indian king, in emblematic pictures. So in North America, to preserve historical events, they peel off the bark on one side of a tree, scrape it clean, and then draw with ruddle the figure of a hero and his military exploits; the representation of a hunting party, and the beasts killed; or any other circumstance they wish to remember, or to record³.

¹ Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer, p. 43.

² Divine Legation, Vol. II.

³ *Loskiel's Hist. of the Mission of the United Brethren in North America*, translated by Latrobe, part I. p. 55.

This way of delineating events would be easily transferred to poetry, which is a method of painting objects upon the imagination, with a strength and durability which mere literal expression can by no means effect. And ‘an ALLEGORY (according to Lord KAIMS) is in every respect similar to an allegorical painting; except only that words are used instead of colours. The effects are precisely the same. An hieroglyphic raises two images in the mind; one *seen*, which represents one *not seen*: an allegory does the same; the *representative* subject is described, and resemblance leads us to apply the description to the subject represented’.

Again, in the early state of society men converse much by the aid of *action*. When they know not how accurately to name an object, they point to it; or, in the absence of the object itself, to its image or resemblance; hence arises the language of action as well as words. Of the Indian orators it is remarked, that they use a great variety of gesticulations: and the same is true of the natives of the South Sea Islands, and of all uncivilized nations, in proportion to their vivacity. Nor is this method confined to uncivilized society. With the deaf and dumb, action is employed as a substitute for speech; and on the theatre it forms a favourite species of amusement; for what are the ballet and the pantomime but speaking action? To such a degree of perfection was this art car-

¹ Elements of Criticism, Vol. II. p. 269.

ried by the ancients, that *Roscius*, the celebrated Roman actor, boasted to Cicero that he could express any sentiment in as great a variety of intelligible gestures as he could of words.

Even *dancing*, which is with us a mere amusement, and in general a very vain one, appears to have been much more dignified in its original; being employed in the religious worship of the Greeks, the Egyptians, and even the Hebrews. Among the former it is supposed to have been an imitation of the motion of the heavenly bodies. So *Lucian* tells us, that ‘dancing had its rise
‘with the first beginning of all things—for the
‘choral revolution of the stars, and the complicated motions of the planets among the fixed stars,
‘and their regular communion with each other,
‘and well-ordered harmony, are instances of the
‘primeval dancing¹.’ To this idea our *MILTON* evidently alludes, when he reckons dancing among the employments of heaven.

‘That day, as other solemn days, they spent
‘In joy and *dance* about the sacred hill;
‘Mystical dance, which yonder starry sphere
‘Of planets, and of fix’d, in all her wheels
‘Resembles nearest, mazes intricate,
‘Eccentric, intervolve’d, yet regular
Then most, when most irregular they seem².’

That the Hebrews employed dancing in their religious worship is indisputable from the instance of David and others, in the Old Testa-

¹ *Lucian peri Orchesteos*, Vol. I. p. 913. Ed. Ben;

² *Par. Lost*, Book V. l. 620.

ment¹ ; and it is no less certain that it was practised in the religious services of the Heathens, as it is to this day, in various countries ; all their sacred feasts being accompanied with dancing².

But to return from this digression, and keep nearer to our subject, it merits our particular attention that the prophets themselves frequently accompanied their oracles with some symbolical action ; and their exhortations were commonly delivered with great animation and violent gestures, such as clapping of the hands, smiting on the thigh, and stamping with the foot³ ; all which actions, perhaps, were commonly used in the sacred dances.

Many of these actions, it must be confessed, appear to us extravagant and unaccountable ; but this arises from the difference of customs and habits ; and many of ours would doubtless have appeared as strange and unaccountable to them : though it might be added, that some of the most celebrated orators of Greece, France, and our own country, have on particular occasions, used the most energetic action.

¹ 2 Sam. vi. 14, 16. 1 Chron. xv. 29, &c.

² It seems more extraordinary that the custom should obtain among a denomination of modern christians ; yet we are assured there now exists a christian sect at Lebanon in North America, called *Shakers*, (or shaking quakers) who used at first violent gesticulations in their worship (like the jumpers in Wales) but who now, in public worship, have ‘ a regular, solemn, uniform *dance*, or genuflection, to as regular, solemn a hymn, which is sung by the elders, and as regularly conducted as a proper band of music.’ See the New-York Theol. Mag. for Nov. and Dec. 1795.

³ Ezek. vi. 11 ; xxi. 12, 14.

The last source of the metaphorical language of the Scriptures, [which I shall distinctly mention is, that God himself was pleased to institute a kind of *silent language*, both in the works of nature, and in the types of revealed religion.

First, in the works of *nature* : ‘ Because that
 ‘ which may be known of God is manifest in them
 ‘ — for the invisible things of him from the crea-
 ‘ tion of the world are clearly seen (being under-
 ‘ stood by the things which are made) even his
 eternal power and Godhead¹’ The Hebrew Psalmist expresses the same idea in all the charms of poetic language².

‘ The heavens declare the glory of God ;
 ‘ And the expansion³ sheweth the work of his hands,
 ‘ Day after⁴ day uttereth speech,
 ‘ Night after night revealeth knowledge.
 ‘ There is no speech, nor language ;
 ‘ Without⁵ [these] is their voice heard.
 ‘ Into all the earth is their sound⁶ gone forth ;
 ‘ And unto the extremities of the world their sayings ;
 ‘ In them hath he set a tabernacle for the Sun,
 ‘ Which goeth forth as a bridegroom from his chamber,
 ‘ And rejoiceth as a mighty man to run a race !’

¹ Rom. i. 19, 20.

² Psalm xix. 1, &c.

³ This is doubtless the meaning of the Hebrew (רָקִיעַ) ; our translators erred by following the LXX. and they were misled by their philosophy.

⁴ So the particle ל is rendered, Gen. vii. 10. See *Poli Synop.* in Psalm.

⁵ See Job viii. 11. in the Heb. where this particle בלי is twice so rendered.

⁶ So the apostle Paul quotes this passage, Rom. x. 18. Dr. *Durell* thinks a letter has been dropped here, and that we should read קול, as in the preceding verse ; but as this is not supported by MSS. Dr. *Kennicot* rather thinks that the word קול might signify sound, or report, like a kindred word in Arabic ; and this will agree with the radical idea, which is to project, extend, &c. See *Parkhurst*.

To this beautiful object the Psalmist elsewhere compares the Deity himself: 'God is a sun':¹ *i. e.* as the sun is the source of light and heat to the terrestrial world, so is God the fountain of wisdom, and of all excellence. From this striking resemblance, the solar luminary was made originally the medium, and afterward the object, of religious worship, which in succeeding ages degenerated to meaner and baser idols.

Leaving, however, the abuse of these things, it is sufficiently evident that much of the divine perfections may be learned from the works of creation; though I dare not consider them as images of the divine nature in the manner of its existence, because I conceive the Most High to be, *in that respect*, a being without parallel, and without similitude. 'To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?'²

The volume of nature is open to all, but peculiarly so to men of poetic genius: their eyes discover a thousand charms unobserved by others; and this is the grand treasury, whence their best and most striking images are drawn. A different class of beauties unveil themselves to the pious believer, who claims an interest in, and a relation to, their Author. The religious poet possesses both advantages; but the prophet a third, which perfected and crowned the others.

¹ Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

² Isa. lx. 13.

Bishop LOWTH on Isaiah, chap. ii. 13—16, remarks, ‘ These verses afford us a striking example of that peculiar way of writing which makes ‘ a principal characteristic of the *paraboli- cal* or ‘ *poetical style*, of the Hebrews, and in which ‘ their prophets deal so largely ; namely, their ‘ manner of exhibiting things divine, spiritual, moral, and political, by a set of images taken from ‘ things natural, artificial, religious, historical ; in ‘ the way of *metaphor* or *allegory*. Of these *na- ture* furnishes much the largest, and the most pleasing share ; and all poetry has chiefly recourse ‘ to natural images, as the richest and most powerful source of illustration. But it may be observed of the Hebrew poetry in particular, that ‘ in the use of such images, and in the application of ‘ them in the way of illustration and ornament, it is ‘ more regular and constant than any other poetry ‘ whatever ; that it has, for the most part, a set ‘ of images appropriated, in a manner, to the explication of certain subjects. Thus you will ‘ find, in many other places beside this before us, ‘ cedars of Lebanon and oaks of Basan are used in ‘ the way of metaphor and allegory, for kings, ‘ princes, potentates, of the highest rank ; high ‘ mountains, and lofty hills, for kingdoms, republics, states, cities ; towers and fortresses for defenders and protectors, whether by counsel or ‘ strength, in peace or war ; ships of Tarshish, ‘ and works of art and invention employed in ‘ adorning them, for merchants, men enriched by ‘ commerce, and abounding in all the luxuries and ‘ elegancies of life ; such as those of Tyre and ‘ Sidon.’

Sometimes the natural and moral world are compared in like manner, by a set of images not less beautiful, and little less sublime. Thus mankind, in a state of natural depravity, are compared to the wild olive and the poisonous vine, which are, by the grace of God, converted into the good olive and the fruitful vine. So the thorn, the thistle, and the bramble, are changed into the box, the myrtle, and the fir-tree. The grace of God itself is compared to fountains and rivers of living water; and the odours emitted by the most fragrant plants represent that 'good report of all men, and of the truth itself,' which results from a truly virtuous and christian character. By an assemblage of these images, both Solomon and Isaiah compare the church of God to a rich, fertile, and inclosed garden.

2. *Typical* images and allusions are another grand and important source of figurative language. *Types* are properly *figurative things*; and typical actions, things, places, or persons, bear the same relation to other actions, things, places, or persons, that figurative language bears to literal.

The method of typical instruction appears to have been adopted by God himself, immediately on the creation of mankind. When God formed our first parents he placed them in a garden, planted, as it should seem, with figurative instruction. The tree (or trees) *of life*, had certainly a typical allusion and figurative design, pointing, in the first instance, to that immortality to which he was originally created. So, it has been supposed

the *tree of knowledge* received its name, from being appointed the test and medium of knowing practically the difference between *good and evil*, After the fall, the tree of life was employed as an image of a happy life ; and a type of eternal happiness, and of Him who was to be the author and medium of it. But to shew that this life was not to be obtained by the mere strength of human exertion, the cherubim, inclosed with cloud and revolving flame, were placed to guard the entrance to the garden where it grew.

It is observable, that the first promise of divine mercy was made in this kind of figurative language. — ‘ The *seed* of the woman’ was to ‘ *break* the *serpent’s head*, and at the same time to be wounded by it in his *heel*.’ These are all figurative terms. The serpent, as he had been the agent, was also to be considered as the emblem of Satan. After the fall, also, our first parents were clothed with the skins of beasts, which, there is reason to believe, had a figurative import.

The tabernacle and temple were not only types themselves, but full of typical things. Their institutions and services were all typical ; and even the instruments and utensils employed in them. But of what they were typical, is another subject of inquiry. JOSEPHUS makes the tabernacle, the sacerdotal vestments, and the holy vessels, all figurative of the system of the world and nature. The three parts of the tabernacle he resembles to the earth, the sea, and the heavens. The twelve loaves of the shew-bread, according to him, sig-

nify the twelve months. The golden candlestick (or chandelier) represents the signs of the zodiac, and the seven lamps the planets. The curtains, of four colours, the four elements. The high priest's linen garments, design the body of the earth, and the violet colour, the heavens—the pomegranates answer to lightning, and the bells to thunder.—‘The four-coloured ephod bears resemblance to the very nature of the universe, and the interweaving it with threads of gold, to the rays of the sun, which enlighten us.—The pectoral (or breast-plate) in the middle, intimates the position of the earth in the centre of the world.—The priest's girdle, the sea about the globe of the earth—the two sardonyx stones on the shoulders, the sun and moon—and by the other twelve stones on the breast, may be understood either the twelve months, or the twelve signs of the zodiac¹.’—Fanciful and extravagant as this account seems, we may learn from it two things deserving observation : 1. That the antient Jews considered these things as typical and figurative ; and 2. That the carnal part of them being ignorant of the mysteries of the gospel, applied them to natural instead of spiritual objects ; just as now some men, (who call themselves rational christians) reduce christianity to the standard of natural religion.

¹ Antiq. lib. iii. cap. 7. So Philo, and among the more modern Jews, R. Abrabanel and R. Bechai, explain the tabernacle as representing the universe, in a manner not very dissimilar from Josephus. See Kidder's Messiah, 2d edit. fol. p. 113, 114.

St. PAUL, and the other New Testament writers, represent these things in a different point of view. Christ and christianity are *all in all* with them. In one remarkable circumstance only, St Paul and the Jewish historian seem perfectly to agree—they make the holy of holies typical of heaven, the immediate residence of God. The epistle to the Hebrews is a system of typical exposition; to which may be added that of St. BARNABAS, whose interpretations, however fanciful they may seem, are certainly not more so than the allegories of Philo and Josephus.



SECTION II.

ON THE ORIGIN OF POETRY, AND ON THE NATURE OF THE HEBREW POETRY.

IN tracing the origin of figurative language, we have also traced the origin of poetry, since the first poetry appears to have been only language highly figurative and musical.

It is in this sense, as Dr. Blair observes, ' Poetry has been said to be more ancient than ' prose : and, however paradoxical such an asser- ' tion may seem, yet, in a qualified sense, it is ' true. Men certainly never conversed with one ' another in regular numbers ; but even their ordi- ' nary language would, in antient times, approach ' to a poetical style ; and the first compositions

‘ transmitted to posterity were, in a literal sense, poems ; that is, compositions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into some kind of numbers, and pronounced with a musical modulation or tone’.

It is indeed easy to believe, that human language might attain a considerable degree of elevation and force, before it acquired the exactness of prose composition. This we observe in young writers, who, if they possess any degree of genius, are generally flowery and poetic : and find much time and practice needful to attain the neatness and purity of correct prose. The human mind, like a good vine, sends forth vigorous and lofty branches ; but it requires the judgment of an experienced hand to prune away the weak and unnecessary shoots, in order to give perfection to the fruit. Or, we may compare it to a river, strong and rapid in a state of nature, but often ready to overflow its boundaries, and desolate the surrounding country, till the hand of art rears high and strong banks, and by proper canals and locks, distributes its waters, so as to be the means only of fertility and pleasure.

The nature of the Hebrew poetry hath been so learnedly and satisfactorily ascertained by Bp. Lowth, and his system is so well known and generally adopted by the learned, that what I shall offer on this subject will be little more than the result of his discoveries.

¹ Dissertation on Ossian's Poems, also lecture vi. p. 132. &c. See likewise Bishop Lowth's Prelect. sect. iv.

That the Hebrew poetry does not consist in rhyme, is very evident; and no less so that it consisted not in measured lines of equal length, like those of blank verse: but it is distinguished from simple prose by the following circumstances.

1. The use of highly figurative language, of which we have seen several examples in the preceding section; and with which our prophetic writers particularly abound. This is perfectly natural and consistent. Our first views of objects are generally exaggerated, and make a strong impression on the mind from their novelty: hence it is natural to speak of them in poetic language. And this language is perfectly adapted to prophecy, since it was natural to describe with rapturous and glowing language, what was seen in vision and in ecstasy.

A 2d mark of poetic composition is the arrangement of the words in their poetic order, which is often the reverse of the prosaic. To those acquainted with the learned languages this remark can want no illustration; and to the plainest English reader it may be rendered intelligible by a single verse from the oracle to Shebna¹.

‘ And I will drive thee from thy station,
‘ And from thy state will I overthrow thee.’

Here the first line gives the prosaic, and the second the poetic order: not but poetry admits

¹ Lowth's Isa. xxii. 19.

the former arrangement, though modern prose seldom will admit the latter.

The 3d and most characteristic property of Hebrew poetry is what Bishop Lowth calls a *parallelism*; or a certain poetic correspondency between the parts and members of the poetic verses. The different lengths and measures of the Hebrew verse are ascertained by the alphabetic psalms¹ and poems, in which every verse begins with a certain letter, in the manner of an acrostic. Transferring the rules derived from these examples to the other poetical parts of scripture, we find that they resolve themselves into poetic lines, or verses, as in the following examples; though it may not be always easy to mark and divide them so distinctly.

‘ Seek ye Jehovah, while he may be found;

‘ Call ye upon him while he is near².’

‘ A wise son rejoiceth his father;

‘ But a foolish son is the grief of his mother³.’

‘ Give a portion to seven, and also to eight;

‘ For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the
‘ earth⁴.’

These instances, borrowed from Bishop Lowth, exhibit the three kinds of parallels, which he calls synonymous, antithetic, and constructive; but for a full account of them I must refer to his learned preliminary dissertation to

¹ Psalm xxv. &c. xxxiv. xxxvii. cxi. cxii. cxix. cxlv. Prov. xxxi. 10—31; and Lament. i. ii. iii. iv.

² Isa. lv. 6.

³ Prov. x. 1.

⁴ Eccles. xi. 2.

Isaiah, where the inquisitive reader will find ample satisfaction.

I would add, however, that the Hebrew poetry consists of long and short lines, of couplets, triplets, and other combinations of verses sufficient to form a considerable variety, and to suit the different species of poetic composition employed by the inspired writers:

4. The last mark of the poetic style is a certain *rhythm* and harmonious arrangement of the syllables. That the verses had something regular in their form and composition, seems probable from their apparent parity and uniformity, and the relation which they manifestly bear to the distribution of the sentence into its members. But as to the harmony and cadence, the metre or rhythm, of what kind they were, and by what laws regulated, these examples give us no light, nor afford us sufficient principles on which to build any theory, or to form any hypothesis. For harmony arises from the proportion, relation, and correspondence of different combined sounds; and verse from the arrangement of words, and the disposition of syllables, according to the number, quantity, and accent; therefore the harmony and true modulation of verse depends upon a perfect pronunciation of the language, and a knowledge of the principles and rules of versification; and metre supposes an exact knowledge of the number and quantity of the syllables, and in some languages of the accent. But the true pronunciation of Hebrew is lost: lost to a degree

‘far beyond what can ever be the case of any European language preserved only in writings : for the Hebrew language...has lain now for 2000 years, in a manner mute, and incapable of utterance : the number of syllables is, in a great many words, uncertain : the quantity and accent wholly unknown :’

Thus the learned translator of Isaiah ; and, by this extract, the reader will perceive his lordship pays little regard to the Masoretic points and accents, and esteems ‘ the rules of the Jews of no authority.’ Without these, however, that the Hebrew writers had a respect to quantity and accent, there is sufficient evidence in the *poetic licences* they employ in lengthening and abbreviating words, by forms little used in their prose or historical compositions ; and by an arrangement of words sometimes very intricate, and at this distance of time, very hard to understand.

We have said, the Hebrews had their poetic licences, and to these, I conceive, should be referred some peculiarities in their language, which critics and grammarians have found it difficult to account for. Among these, one of the principal seems to be an *enallage* or change of tenses ; the past for future, and the future for past, or rather both past and future for the *present* ; which is wanting in the Hebrew, excepting the participle, and this in many cases cannot be conveniently employed. It is however rather as a poetic beauty,

¹ Lowth’s Prelim. Dissert. to Isaiah, 8vo. ed. p. 10. See also his Lectures, Lect. III.

than from necessity, that the prophets so frequently, 'rapt into future times,' consider them as present, or even past, and relate them with all the certitude of history. Instances of this abound in Scripture, and none is perhaps more beautiful and striking than the 53d chapter of Isaiah.

It is true, indeed, that the sacred writers frequently employ the contrary idiom, and use the future for the past¹, which seems not so easy to be accounted for². In many places the tenses are used promiscuously, and interchangeably, in the same or in succeeding verses; in which case, perhaps, both ought to be rendered into English by the *present*, for which I suppose them generally to be used; being designed to collect the actions or events, either past or future, more immediately under the observer's eye; and thus rendered, would, I conceive, acquire additional elegance and beauty³.

¹ Deut. iv. 42. Psal. lxxx. 9. &c.

² Grammarians have endeavoured to get over these difficulties by ascribing a kind of magic influence to the particle *vau* (ו) which has the power, they say, according as it is pointed, to convert preters into futures, and *vice versâ*. Some give it a sort of magnetic virtue, by which they suppose it can operate at a distance; so that if you can find this *vau* within two or three verses it may suffice. Others go farther, and supposing this *vau* to be often omitted, allow you to understand, or supply one. So that in short, wherever you may suppose an enallage of tenses, you have only to find a *vau* prefix; or, if you cannot find, you may supply one, and the work is done. Every one must see the fatuity of these rules, and their tendency to perplex translators.

³ Examine for instance, Deut. xxxii. 10—20; Ps. lxxviii. 36—41, in the original.

SECTION III.

ON THE HEBREW MUSIC AND RECITATION.

LET us now enquire into the primitive method of reciting poetry. Poetry, being in a peculiar manner the language of contemplation and devotion, appears naturally to require and assume a higher tone, and sublimer expression, than mere prose. It is said that the celebrated president *Edwards*, who was fond of retirement and solitary contemplation, used when alone in the woods of North America, to *chaunt* forth his meditations; and it was probably the case with the first generations. *MILTON* reckons devotional melody among the employments of our first parents, in their state of innocence.

‘ Their oraisons each morning duly paid
 ‘ In various style; for neither various style,
 ‘ Nor holy rapture, wanted they to praise
 ‘ Their Maker in fit strains pronounc’d, or *sung*
 ‘ Unmeditated; such prompt eloquence
 ‘ Flow’d from their lips, in prose, or *num’rous verse*,
 ‘ More tunable than needed lute or harp
 ‘ To add more sweetness¹.’

Dr. *BLAIR* assumes it as a principle², ‘ that the
 ‘ pronunciation of the earliest languages was ac-
 ‘ companied with more gesticulation, and with
 ‘ more and greater *inflexions* of *voice* than we now

¹ Par. Lost, book v.² Lect. VI.

‘ use¹; there was more action in it; and it was ‘ more upon a crying or *singing tone*.’

The union of poetry and music among the Hebrew prophets, is evident from their commonly prophesying with instruments of music²; and that even when they do not appear capable of performing themselves, as was probably the case of Elisha, who called for a minstrel to play before him, when he invoked the prophetic spirit³.

In the earliest ages of the Greeks, we find the same union of poetry and music: their bards, in imitation of the Hebrew prophets, being both poets and musicians, and (which is worthy of peculiar remark) universally claiming a degree and kind of inspiration, either from the gods, or from the muses: whence St. Paul, in accommodation to their own style, calls the Greek poets, *their* prophets:—‘ As certain of their own prophets have ‘ said⁴,’ referring, as is supposed, to Aratus and Cleanthes.

These Greek prophets, poets, or musicians; it appears originally delivered their compositions in a kind of extemporaneous melody, accompanied upon the lyre. So did in particular, Hesiod and

¹ So the learned Mr. Blackwell supposes that, at first, mankind ‘ uttered their words in a *much higher note* than we ‘ do now; occasioned by their falling upon them under ‘ some *passion*, fear, wonder, or pain. Hence *Ἀυδεῖν* signified at first simply to *speak*, which now, with a small variation, *ὀδεῖν*, signifies to sing.’ Enq. into the Life of Homer, p. 38.

² 1 Sam. x. 2—12. xix. 20—24.

³ 2 Kings iii. 15.

⁴ Acts xvii. 28.

Homer ; and the latter in describing *Demodocus* (probably intended as a portrait of himself) says,

‘ The bard advancing meditates the lay :’

And supposing him to be under a divine influence, adds,

‘ *Taught by the gods* to please, when high he sings
‘ The vocal lay, responsive to the strings¹.’

It should even seem that in those early times, nothing but poetry was sung ? and poetry in no other way recited ; whence to recite and sing became synonymous in poetic language, and so continue to the present day². Dr. BLAIR thinks that even the declamation of the Greek and Roman orators, as well as the pronunciation of their stage-actors, ‘ approached to the nature of a recitative ‘ in music, and was capable of being marked in ‘ notes, and supported with instruments³.’

This inseparable union of poetry and music was preserved in many nations till within these few ages ; and is in some, even to this very day. The Druidical and Celtic, German, Gaëlic, British, Caledonian, and Hibernian bards and minstrels, are all famous in the page of history. Mr. STEWARD, an eminent traveller⁴, mentions a vestige of extemporaneous verses and singing with instru-

¹ *Odys.* book viii.

² *Burney's Hist. of Music*, vol. I. p. 281, and note (c) 312. *Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac.* book I. ch. iv. sect. 1 ; and *Rousseau's Dict. de Mus. in Opera.*

³ *Lect.* vi. vol. I.

⁴ *Harris's Philological Enquiries*, p. 286.

mental accompaniment, as a kind of elegant amusement among the modern Athenians, of which he was an eye and ear witness. The *Barcarolles* (or extemporaneous ballads) of the gondoliers, or watermen of Venice, are famous all over Italy; not only among the vulgar, but even among the most celebrated masters. And ROUSSEAU tells us, there is nothing more common in that country, than to see two extemporary musicians challenge, attack each other, and form alternate couplets on the same air, with a vivacity of dialogue, melody, and accompaniment, incredible but to an eye-witness¹.

Of the merits of the Hebrew music, musical writers have indeed formed very low estimates, and spoken with much contempt. ‘To speak freely on this matter (says Sir J. HAWKINS) whatever advantages this people might derive from the instructions of an inspired law-giver, and the occasional interpositions of the Almighty, it no where appears that their attainments in literature were great, or that they excelled in any of those arts that attend the refinement of human manners. With respect to their music, there is but too much reason to suppose it was VERY BARBAROUS.’

As to *literature*, where shall we find historians, poets, or philosophers, equal to Moses, Isaiah, and Solomon? But with respect to their *MUSIC*, I beg leave to transcribe, with some variation,

¹ Rouss. Dict. de Musique, in *Barcorelles* and *Improvisare*.

the observations I have offered on this subject in another work¹.

First, I observe that the Jews appear to have been always *fond of music*. Whatever polite arts they neglected, this they cultivated to the utmost of their power, even from the lowest to the highest ranks. Not only David the shepherd, but David the king, was a musician. Solomon, whether or not a performer himself, provided singing men and singing women, with abundance of instruments². The prophets generally, if not always, used them, and music was taught in their schools, the only seminaries of learning among the Hebrews³.

They likewise highly honoured those who were famous in this art, ranking them with their most illustrious characters. Thus the son of Sirach, 'Let us praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people; wise and eloquent in their instructions. Such as found out musical tunes and recited verses in writing. All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times⁴.'

Neither was this attention to music merely in obedience to the divine appointment, since, when they degenerated to idolatry, their music was perverted too: and on every festival, music and

Historical Essay on Church Music prefixed to Psalmodia Evan. vol. II. p. 19. and seq. ² Eccles. ii. 8.

³ 1 Sam. x. 2—12. xix. 20—24. 1 Kings, xx. 35. 2 Kings, iii. 15. 1 Chron. xxv. 1—3. Psal. xlix. 4.

⁴ Eccles. xliv. 1—7.

dancing seem constantly to form principal parts of their employment. Nor is their attachment to music to be wondered at. Their climate was warm, and Dr. BURNLEY repeatedly tells us, that the inhabitants of hot countries are most fond of music¹.

2. As to *performers*, it must be confessed that the human voice is the same in all ages; and if, in their present state, some of the Jewish nation have not only gained admiration at the synagogue, but applause at our public theatres²; it seems no absurd supposition, that their ancestors, in a state of opulence and prosperity, educated in the study of the science, and patronised by the most liberal and accomplished princes, might be capable, if not of such volubility and so many artificial graces, yet of melodies more chaste, and tones more charming to the unvitiated ear; and it is granted by the best judges, that no kind of music has so great an effect on the human passions.

The great number of the *children of the Levites*³ would always provide a powerful chorus of treble voices, and some select ones, with those of the singing women, would furnish a variety for the solo parts. The Levites also, being themselves educated to music in a very early period, and many of them devoted wholly to that employ-

¹ German Tour, vol. I. page 3; Hist. vol. IV. 565.

² Sig. Leoni, &c.

³ The ingenious Mr. BEDFORD supposes (Temple music, p. 76—79) that this expression is not to be understood literally, but of the singing boys their disciples, which seems probable from every family containing the same number.

1 Chron. xxv. 8—31.

ment, with a proper provision for their support; would have every desirable opportunity for improvement:

3. The *musical instruments* of the Hebrews form the next, and a very curious subject of enquiry: The Hebrew musical instruments, as indeed all others, are of three kinds; *nechilotb*, or wind-instruments, *neginoth*, or stringed instruments, and the timbrel, tabret, cymbal, &c. which were pulsative, or of the drum kind: Of the former, the principal is the organ which was invented by Jubal, several centuries before the flood. This, in its first state, was probably similar to the syrinx, or pipes of Pan, composed of several reeds of unequal lengths, and, consequently, different sounds: An instrument of this kind has been found in several uncivilized countries; and though it may bear no comparison with modern instruments, it is hard to say to what perfection it might be carried by artists, who could devote five hundred years, or more, to its study and improvement. It was evidently a pastoral instrument, and if we may credit the additional psalm in the Septuagint, David used to make it when a shepherd. Whether the Hebrews ever connected a bag with these pipes is uncertain; but Kircher describes what he calls an ancient organ, consisting of a row of pipes in a chest, blown by a pipe instead of bellows, and probably stopped with the fingers, instead of keys.

The other wind-instruments were chiefly *borns* and trumpets; and these, no doubt, originally,

were the horns of animal, and chiefly used as military music.

Jubal, the antediluvian, is also celebrated as the inventor of the *harp* or Hebrew lyre, which was the most ancient of stringed instruments, and a great favorite of the Jewish nation. They call it the *pleasant* harp¹, and made it the constant companion of their pleasures² as well as devotion. It is supposed that this instrument was improved to a considerable degree of perfection by the Egyptians, at a period, perhaps, considerably anterior to this³; and there seems no good reason to pronounce the Hebrew harp inferior to the Egyptian, except in size. David and the Levites often dancing as they played, shews that it must have been with them a portable instrument.

JOSEPHUS ascribes the *psaltery* to Jubal, as well as the harp; but the scriptures never mention it till the time of David; and it might possibly be one of the instruments he invented. The rabbins describe this instrument in a form not unlike that of a lantern, which may be true of a more modern instrument under the same name. The Hebrew name *nebel*, which signifies a bottle, jug, or flaggon, seems to determine its shape to that kind of figure, as both Jewish and Christian writers have observed⁴. JOSEPHUS says it had twelve sounds, and was played upon by the fingers; herein being

¹ Psal. lxxxix. 2.

² Isa. xxiv. 8.

³ See *Burney's Hist. of Music*, vol. I. p. 220*.

⁴ Ainsworth, in Psal. xxxiii. 2, and at the end of his annotations. See also *Calmet's Dict.*

distinguished from the harp, which was played with a *plectrum*¹, *i. e.* a piece of bone, wire, or quill; as it was so late as the time of our great king Alfred. Another and principal difference, however, probably was, that the former, being a weaker instrument, was used to accompany the female voices; and the latter as more powerful, the men, who sung an octave lower².

This instrument was also famous among the heathen, who esteemed it a Phœnician invention; and Ovid describes it as turned about with the hands in playing³. From these circumstances it should seem of the same species with the modern lute or mandoline, having perhaps a short neck, and the back rounded. The modern Jews use the same word for a violin, and our translators have in some places rendered it a viol⁴. David mentions an instrument of ten strings, which the Talmud interprets of a species of harp, and others of the psaltery; but it should seem to have been distinguishable from both, though perhaps only in some trifling circumstance⁵.

Among the instruments used to accompany the sacred dances, were the *shalishim*, rendered sim-

¹ Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 12.

² So is commonly, and I think justly understood, the regulation of the royal psalmist, 1 Chron. xv. 20, 21. Certain leaders were appointed to play with psaltery *on alamoeth*, על־עלמות, for the virgins, *i. e.* to accompany their voices; and others with harps, *on the sheminoth*, for the octave voices, *i. e.* the men, who sung an octave lower.

³ See Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon, in גבל.

⁴ Isa. v. 12. xiv. 11. Amos v. 23. vi. 5.

⁵ See Psal. xcii. 3.

ply instruments of music¹, which probably were steel *triangles*, such as are used by our street musicians, with or without the addition of rings, to assist the tinkling. Some critics, however, chuse to render this word, by the same rule of interpretation with the preceding, an instrument of *three strings*.

Of the third class of instruments we have the *toph*, timbrel, or tabret. This appears to have been exactly the same instrument as the Syrian *diff*, or modern *tambourine*, which has lately been introduced among us as a companion to the barrel organ. This also was the usual accompaniment of dancing, whether secular or sacred.

Their cymbals appear to have been of two kinds, the *tzilzell shamagh* and *tzilzell temgab*, the *loud-sounding* and the *high-sounding* cymbal², which were probably distinguished by the size; the former, being the larger, and that used on the grandest occasions, having been also lately introduced into our military bands, as a part of the Turkish music, needs no description; every person who has heard it, must be sensible of its solemn and peculiar effects, as an accompaniment to other instruments.

This enumeration of the Hebrew instruments may be sufficient to shew their powers; and when great numbers of them were united, and accompanied with hundreds, or thousands of human voices, which would greatly cover their imperfection, their chorus must have been highly anima-

¹ 1 Sam. xviii. 6.

² Psal. cl. 3.

ting, whether in the temple or in the camp. We may, also, in a great measure infer the probable excellency of the Hebrew music from the euphony of their language, and the sublimity of their poetry. On the former, some learned men have pronounced very warm eulogiums¹, and if we might be allowed to form a judgment from the few words, such as Amen, Hallelujah, &c. which have been adopted into our own and many other languages, nothing can be better adapted for musical expression. It is, however, very difficult to judge of the pronunciation of a language that must have undergone so many changes; and has been, in a manner, a dead language for so many centuries.

As to the Hebrew poetry, Mr. ADDISON, a critic of the first rank in literature, has pronounced the Hebrew hymns and odes to excel those that are delivered down to us by the ancient Greeks and Romans in the poetry, as much as in the subject to which it was consecrated. This may be made obvious, even to an English reader: let the Bible version of the psalms and prophecies, under all the disadvantages of its being literal, and sometimes inaccurate, be compared with the highly finished versions of Virgil and Homer, by Dryden and Pope, and that person must have either very strong prejudices, or a very weak judgment, who does not immediately perceive the superiority of the former².

¹ Univ. Hist. vol. III. 201, and note N.

² See Spectator, vol. VI. No. 405, 453.

Nor must this be imputed solely to the inspiration of the writers, since there is as much difference in their style as between that of men uninspired. Moses, David, and Amos, differ nearly as Milton, Watts, and Bunyan. So, in the New Testament, there is a manifest difference between Peter, Luke, and Paul. The Spirit of inspiration, doubtless, raised and improved their intellectual powers, but did not annihilate them. One was sublime and nervous; a second, sententious and concise; a third, elegant and diffuse; all beautiful, though various. Thus, ‘ There is one ‘ glory of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars.’

The excellence of the Hebrew poetry may be urged in favour of the language, and both in favour of their music. Sublime and beautiful compositions are seldom produced in rude and inharmonious languages, and poetry is rarely cultivated where music is greatly neglected. This remark has greater force in reference to former times, when the professions were united, than to the present, when they are distinct. It is very difficult to suppose, that the most poetic nation in the world should be unmusical; or that the inimitable odes of Moses, David, and Isaiah should be composed to ‘ very barbarous’ music.

The investigation of the Jewish musical theory would be foreign to our present purpose. If the diatonic scale be that of Nature, as Lord Bacon says¹, it is natural to suppose it the most ancient,

¹ Natural Hist. page 30.

not only in the world, but in every country ; and this notion very well agrees with the few fragments of ancient music still remaining.

From the construction of the syrx or Hebrew organ, of a regular series of pipes, it should seem that they used the whole octave, without omitting the natural semi-tones, as in the old Greek enharmonic, the Chinese and ancient Scottish scales¹ ; and this idea is rendered more probable from the number of strings on some of their instruments, which we know to have been at least ten in David's time, when scarcely half that number was used in Greece.

As to the *length of their notes*, it is certain that formerly the duration of sounds was always regulated by the length of the syllables to which they were adapted. These among the Greeks were of two sorts, long and short. The modern Jews, however, have vowels of four different lengths ; and Mr. *Bedford* supposes, that the ancient Hebrews had as great a variety in their musical notes².

It is generally believed, and not without reason, that the most ancient method of singing was a species of *chant*, or recitative ; yet in the only text in which our translators have used the word *chant* (in the margin *quaver*) it seems to intend an artificial running of divisions³.

¹ *Burney's Hist. of Music*, vol. I. p. 37, 38, and 497 ; compare also p. 226.*

² *Temple Music*, p. 29.

³ *Amos*, vi. 5. See *Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 542.

That *harmony*, in the modern sense of the term, as implying music in different parts was known to the ancient Hebrews, there appears to me little reason to suppose, since we are informed that the great number of voices and instruments employed at the dedication of Solomon's temple made but 'one sound'.¹ This, however, must be supposed to include octaves (as it may with strict propriety) for the treble and bass voices, as well as instruments, would certainly be in diapason. The *musical notation* of the Hebrews is another very curious subject of enquiry. 'Neither the ancient Jews, nor the modern (says Dr. BURNLEY) have ever had characters peculiar to music; so that the melodies used in their religious ceremonies have at all times been traditional, and at the mercy of the singers. The *Canonica Cavallia* is however of opinion, that the points of the Hebrew language were at first musical characters; and this conjecture has been confirmed to me (adds the doctor) by a learned Jew, whom I have consulted on that subject, who says, that the points still serve two purposes; in reading the prophets they merely mark accentuation; in singing them they regulate the melody, not only as to long and short, but high and low notes².' This is a common opinion among the Jews, and is perhaps not totally without foundation. The opinion however, which now prevails among the learned is, that the ancient Hebrews were not

¹ 2 Chron. v. 13.

² Hist. of Music, vol. I. 251.

acquainted either with the points or accents, but that they have been invented by the Jewish doctors since the Christian æra¹.

If we were to consider the effects of the Jewish music, particularly in the case of Saul, and its general influence over the dispositions of the people, we might safely compare them with any that can be well attested in the Grecian history. We might also enlarge on the degree of refinement to which this and other arts were carried in the elegant court of Solomon, and the notice afterwards taken of the 'Songs of Sion' among their eastern conquerors². But these circumstances would lead us into a very extensive field of enquiry; we shall therefore conclude with observing, that,

On the whole—If the Jews were a nation much attached to music—if their dispensation had peculiar advantages for its cultivation—if their voices and instruments were, at least, equal to those of any other cotemporary nation—if their language was euphonic, and their poetry sublime—if the effects of their music were considerable, and its fame extended to foreign countries—it may certainly deserve a better epithet than that of *very barbarous*: it must have been at least equal to that of any of the ancient nations.

In addition to the above observations on the Hebrew music, I would only add a few remarks on the manner in which it was conducted.

¹ Encyc. Brit. in *Accent*.

Ps. cxxxviii. 3.

Above fifty of the Psalms are directed, as our translators express it, to the *chief musician*. There appear, indeed, to have been several leaders upon the different instruments of music; among these *Asaph* seems, in David's time, to have been the chief, and it is particularly said of him, that he played the cymbals. I conceive the performers to have been placed in two choirs, as in our cathedrals; and that the Psalms were most of them in dialogue, so that the choirs answered to each other, and then joined in chorus. This chief musician (*Asaph*, for instance) I suppose to have stood at the *end*, with the cymbals, by which he directed the performers, and when he wished a hold or pause, to produce any particular effect, or perhaps any particular change in the performance, he elevated his hands with the cymbals (as we see the Turkish musicians frequently do); and this I take to be the precise meaning of the word *selah*, which has so much perplexed the commentators¹.

By the titles of the Psalms it appears that some of them were more particularly designed to be accompanied by *stringed*, and others by *wind* in-

¹ The manner in which the ancient versions have rendered these words has puzzled the critics as much as the words themselves. The LXX, for instance, render מנצח *εις το τέλος*, to the end [*man*], by whom I suppose they meant the leader, who was placed at the upper end of the choir. The word סלח, they render by Διαψαλμα, which expresses not so properly the literal meaning of the word, as its design—a change in the performance, or a deviation in the time.

struments¹. This, though it may appear a trifling distinction in itself, might be of some importance to ascertain the nature of the poetic composition. This idea was suggested by a hint of Sir W. JONES², who observes that the music of the Greeks was accompanied with different instruments, according to the different modes, as the Phrygian with the sound of trumpets, &c. So that a Phrygian was a trumpet-air, a Lydian a flute-air, and so of the rest. If any thing like this obtained among the Hebrews, the stringed instruments probably accompanied the more cheerful strains, and the softer wind instruments, as the organ, &c. the more plaintive.

We have supposed the Hebrew Psalms were performed in dialogue, and this rests not merely on supposition. On some occasions we know that they answered one another, and then doubtless joined in chorus. But as this subject may be resumed, when we come to consider the Song of Solomon as a sacred drama, I shall here conclude the present section, and with it, our first Introductory Essay.

¹ Those for *stringed* instruments are Ps. iv. vi. liv. &c. But one only is marked for *wind* instruments, namely, Ps. v.

² Essay II. added to his Asiatic Poems.

ESSAY II.

ON THE NATURE, DESIGN, AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF SOLOMON'S SONG.

WE now bend our attention to the second general object of enquiry, which will comprehend several particulars, viz.—the author and antiquity of this book—the occasion on which it was composed—the nature of the piece—the images employed—the allegorical design—the inspiration of the book—and an historical sketch of the commentaries upon it.



SECTION I.

LET us enquire first for the AUTHOR of this poem, and, in so doing, endeavour to ascertain its *antiquity*, and, as nearly as possible, its *date*. I admit that the titles of the sacred books of the Old or New Testament, are not *always* either of divine authority, or of very high antiquity: but this I think is clearly so, as being a part of the book itself, and forming the first verse of it, which runs thus: ‘The Song of Songs, which is SOLOMON’S,’ or *of* Solomon. The only question here is, whether the prefix *lamed* employed in the original, intimate that it was written *by*,

or *concerning*, Solomon. Admitting that it may sometimes bear the latter rendering, it is, I think, comparatively very seldom; its certain, usual, and authorized meanings are, *to*, *for*, *with*, or *BY*, answering to the dative and ablative cases, which are (if we may apply the term *cases* to that language) usually blended in the Hebrew, as well as in the Greek. That *lamed* is used for *BY*, as indicating the author, appears from the titles of the Psalms, and other Hebrew poems. Thus several of them are said to be psalms *OF* (or *by*) David, and they are attributed to him in the New Testament, both by our Lord and his apostles¹. So we read of psalms of Asaph, of Solomon², and

¹ Math. xxii. 43. Acts, ii. 25, &c.

² The principal argument I am aware of in favor of understanding this prefix (*ל*), in the sense of *concerning*, is, that it is so used in the title of Ps. lxxii. which seems by the last verse to be written by David—‘the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.’—To this I answer,

1. That some of the best critics and expositors understand this, not as if it were the last of David’s *Psalms* (for that is not said), but as containing the result and completion of his prayers; as if the universality of Messiah’s kingdom was the end, the sum, the accomplishment of David’s prayers [Vide *Poli Syn. Crit.*], or that this was the last subject on which David prophesied, as we see in 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. [*Ainsworth*]. If either of these senses be admitted, it will not prove that David was the author.

2. Dr. *Durell* imagines this verse to be an interpolation; but I think it would be much more correct to suppose it the note of some ancient Jewish transcriber, who took the psalm (as many have done) for the last which he composed. That it is no genuine part of the psalm, is I think sufficiently evident from the conclusion of the preceding verse with a double Amen. So the 1st book (as the Jews di-

of Heman; of the prayers of Moses, of Habakkuk; &c.; which certainly cannot mean prayers *concerning* those prophets. This sense is also confirmed by the ancient versions, and particularly by the Septuagint. The other rendering *concerning* Solomon, clearly originated with the allegorical rabbins, and Christian fathers, who attributing the poem to the Messiah, as the antitype of Solomon, availed themselves of the equivocation of the Hebrew prefix as an argument in their favour. I admit their hypothesis, but shall en-

vide it) ends with Ps. xli.—the 3d with Ps. lxxxix.—the 4th with Ps. cvi. all with double *amen*, as this concludes the 2d book.—Farther, this verse does not appear to be poetry, as are the preceding, and is therefore omitted in the poetic versions of Buchanan, Dr. Watts, Mrs. Rowe, &c. as it is also in the comment of Bp. Horne, who takes no notice of it. As to the ancient versions, it is inserted in the LXX. but omitted in the Arabic, which instead of it inserts *hallelujah*.

3. Admitting the disputed verse in its common acceptance, it yet will not prove that the preceding psalm was David's, for we know that the 50th psalm, which falls into the same book, was Asaph's. It is true the LXX understand the above psalm to be David's, [*εἰς*] *for* Solomon; but the Chaldee paraphrase says, 'This psalm was given by the hand of Solomon in prophecy,' namely, of the Messiah; and I conceive the internal evidence of the psalm leads the same way.—'Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness to the king's son,' *i. e.* give me, the son of David, who am now king in his stead, the communication of wisdom and grace to reign, and to be a proper type of my great descendant the Messiah—for it is chiefly of his kingdom that the author speaks, as the ancient Jews readily confess. In Ps. xxi. David prays concerning himself in a similar manner—'The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord,' &c.

4. Since writing the above, I find *Michaelis* is of opinion 'that this is the end of the first collection of psalms, which was made, probably under Solomon, for the service of the temple.'

deavour to vindicate it from better authority, because I disdain to employ an argument which appears to me fanciful, untenable, and invented only to serve a turn.

In this Song of Solomon, the Seventy take the *lamed*, as they do in the Psalms, for the sign of its author, and render it like our translators¹. Even those critics, who incline to the other rendering, which makes Christ (the true Solomon) the *subject* of the song, are yet disposed to include the literal Solomon as its author, and this is certainly the case as to the Jewish writers; as we may have further occasion to observe.

Now that Solomon composed a great variety of songs or poems, we are told by the inspired author of the book of Kings², who enumerates them at ‘one thousand and five;’ some of these we perhaps have in the book of Psalms—others may be included in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes—and the rest lost, or perhaps, as being only the extemporaneous effusions of his genius, were never committed to writing; but this is called ‘the Song of Songs,’ as being the most considerable and important; or, for the peculiar excellency of its subject³,

¹ Ο ἴστι Σαλωμων. The Syriac calls it, ‘The wisdom of ‘wisdoms of the *same* Solomon,’ *i. e.* the same who wrote the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

² 1 Kings, iv. 32. comp. Eccclus. xlvii. 17.

³ So Holy of holies, King of kings, Heaven of heavens, and more particularly, ‘Ornament of ornaments,’ Ezek. xvi. 7.

Having shewn that this poem claims Solomon for its author, and that this claim was admitted and recognized by the most ancient versions, we may now consider what has been objected to it. The first objection is, that *Josephus* does not mention this among the sacred books; but the fact is, he names none of them distinctly and expressly. His words are, ‘ We have two-and-twenty books ‘ which justly claim our belief and confidence. Of ‘ these, *five* are the books of Moses—*thirteen*, ‘ the books of the prophets—and *four* more contain hymns to God, and admonitions for the correction of human life.’ The question is, which are the four last? We reckon, 1. The Psalms, 2. Proverbs, 3. Ecclesiastes, and, 4. The Song of Solomon: and because the *Psalms* were placed first, and are the most considerable, these four books, appear to have been all anciently comprehended under this name: so our Lord distinguishes the sacred books into the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms¹. These books, sometimes including others, are also called the *hagiographa* or, *sacred writings*, not comprehended in the law and the prophets. I am aware that, in order to exclude ‘ the Song of Songs’ from this canon, some chuse to introduce *Job* as one of the four books; but this appears to me arbitrary, and hypothetical, since *Job* ranks as properly among the historical

¹ Dr. PRIESTLEY says, ‘ There can be *no doubt* but that ‘ the canon of the Old Testament was the same in the time of our Saviour as it is now.’ *Institutes of Rel.* (1782) vol. I. p. 297.

books, Joshua, Judges, &c. which Josephus includes under the general name of prophetic writings¹

It has indeed been suggested, by Voltaire and others, that the divine authority of this book was doubted in the primitive Christian church, and particularly by *Theodorus* of Mopsuestia; but when the fact comes to be examined, it can only be proved that he rejected its allegorical, explanation, and thought it difficult to explain². This Theodore, however, lived in the middle of the sixth century; and his opinion was generally condemned by the other doctors of the church: whereas MELITO, bishop of Sardis, before the middle of the second century, without hesitation enumerates the CANTICLES among the sacred books then universally received³.

Another objection alledged against the antiquity of this book is, that the name of *David* is spelt in the original with a *yod*, according to the manner of spelling it after the captivity. But as this name occurs but once, I cannot see with what propriety this circumstance can be insisted on by critics who maintain that the present Hebrew is full of literal mistakes of far greater importance; nor should I have thought it worth an answer, but for the respectable name from which it comes.

¹ See *Cosins's* Scholastic History of the Canon of the Holy Scripture, p. 12—15. and Gill's Exposition (not Comment.) p. 8.

² *Findlay's* Vindication of the Sacred Books, p. 455—8.

³ *Cosins's* Schol. Hist. p. 33. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. cap. 26.

However, as the subject is a very dry one, I shall throw it into the margin, where the reader will find it completely answered by the very learned Dr. GILL.¹

¹ ' Dr. Kennicot [Dissert. I. p. 20.] observes that the word ' DAVID, from its first appearance in Ruth, where it is written (דָּוִד) without the yod, continues to be so written ' through the books of Samuel, Kings, Psalms, Proverbs, ' Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel ; but appears with a yod ' (דָּוִד) in the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and ' Zachariah ; wherefore he suggests, that if it was customary to write this word without a yod till the captivity, and ' with one after it ; then he thinks a strong argument may ' be drawn from hence against the antiquity of the Canticles ' and its being made by Solomon, since this name is written ' with a *yod* in Canticles, iv. 4. the only place in it in which it ' is used ; but in answer to this, it must be said, it is *not fact*, ' that the word is universally used without a yod in the ' books mentioned, particularly the books of Kings : for the ' authors of the Massorah have observed on 1 Kings iii. 14. ' that it is five times written *full*, as they call it ; *i. e.* with ' the yod. Three of the places I have traced out, (1 Kings ' iii. 14. xi. 4, 36.) and have found it so written in all the ' printed copies I have seen ; and so it is read by the eastern ' Jews in Ezek. xxxvii. 24. and in several printed editions ' of Ezek. xxxiv. 23. This learned man is aware that it is ' so written once in Hosea, and twice in Amos, books ' written 200 years before the captivity ; but then he observes, that in the two last places, in Bomberg's edition, ' it has a little circle (°) to mark it for an error, or a faulty ' word, though none over the word in Hosea : but it should ' be known that that circle, in hundreds of places, is not ' used to point out any thing faulty in the copy ; but is only ' a mark referring to the margin, and what is observed ' there ; and be it, that it does point out an error, or a faulty ' word, the same circle is over the word in Canticles, ' and consequently shews it to be faulty there, and to be ' corrected and read without the yod ; which observation ' destroys the argument from it ; and so it is read in that ' place of the Talmud without it, and in the ancient book ' of *Zohar* : . . . so that upon the whole the argument, ' if it has any force in it, turns out for, and not against, the ' antiquity of Solomon's Song. But this matter stands in ' a clearer light by observing the larger Massorah on 1 Kings ' xi. 4. and on Ezek. xxxiv. 23. in which the five places

As to the use of a few Chaldee and Syriac words, or forms of words, in this book, it can only prove that the author was acquainted with some of the kindred dialects ; and sometimes embellished his poetry with foreign ornaments, perhaps chiefly for the sake of the rhythm, or the pronunciation ; just as the Greeks intermixed their dialects, which differed nearly as these neighbouring eastern languages. The same kind of argument might be employed against the writings of David, and other prophets, as well as against other pieces of the same writer.

Let us next enquire what internal evidence can be drawn from the book itself, particularly from the poetic imagery, to ascertain its high antiquity, and, in some degree, its author. One might be tempted to suppose, that those who place this among the books written in or after the captivity, must never have read it. The beautiful objects of art, from which great part of the imagery is taken were then doubtless, in great measure, in a state of decay. The towers of David and of Lebanon, the fish-pools of Heshbon, the vineyards of Engeddi, and various other things and places referred to, must have been greatly injured by time, had they not fallen into the hands of a foreign enemy : but after the city had been plundered and burned,

‘ are mentioned where this word is written full, 1 Kings, iii. 14. xi. 36. Cant. iv. 4. Ezek. xxxiv. 23. In which places this word was originally so written, as well as throughout Chronicles, the twelve prophets, and Ezra : so that in all these places it is marked not as a faulty word, but as rightly written, though different from what it is in other places.’ Gill’s Exposit. p. 12, 13. 3d edit.

it is impossible to suppose that they remained entire ; much less objects for poetic composition. Beside, this was not a time to celebrate marriages, and write nuptial poems : the poetic compositions of this period were elegies and lamentations ; psalms of confession, and earnest supplications of divine mercy. Nor can an author be pointed out in this period to whom the book can with any probability be referred. There is also, in the last chapter, if I rightly understand it, a reference to the sacrificial flame, which strongly implies that it had not been then extinguished¹.

Again, as some of these images carry us above the captivity, others will carry us up to the time of Solomon himself. The chariots and horses of Pharaoh, would hardly have been thought objects of comparison in later ages, when the kings of Egypt were the enemies of Judah. But the reference to Solomon's nuptial bed, and the invitation to behold him with his crown, cannot by any means be reconciled to a later period.

Still the question remains, at what period of Solomon's life was this composed ? I know that many of the Jewish writers refer it to the latter part of his reign ; but as this opinion does not appear of sufficient antiquity to have any weight as a tradition, it was probably started only as an argu-

¹ See my note on ch. viii. 6.

ment to prove that conversion which it supposes¹. On the contrary, the style and figures employed by no means agree to this hypothesis; and differ totally from those of Ecclesiastes, which is generally, and most reasonably, referred to this latter period.

They who consider the book as carnal and obscene, will no doubt be pleased to refer it to the period of Solomon's dissipation and debauchery; but neither is this situation favourable to finished composition; nor is there any reason to believe, that at this time Solomon composed at all: this, therefore, can only rest on a conjecture made merely with a view to serve an hypothesis, which I hope to overthrow, when I come farther to enquire into the nature and design of the poem.

From the passage in which ' threescore queens ' and ' fourscore concubines ' are mentioned, Mr. *Harmer*, and some others, have supposed the book to have been written when Solomon's wives and concubines did not exceed that number, consequently, some considerable time before they were multiplied to three hundred of the former, and seven hundred of the latter². But, as I think

¹ The son of Sirach enumerates first Songs, then Proverbs (Ecclus. xlvii. 18.) but the Jews, in Midras, observe that in 1 Kings, iv. 32. Proverbs are mentioned first.

² I confess that in this early date of the book I oppose very respectable authority beside that of the rabbins, namely, Dr. LIGHTFOOT and Dr. GILL, who place it full twenty years after Solomon's marriage, from the mention of the

with bishop *Patrick*, that the ladies there mentioned were not those of Solomon's seraglio, I refer the poem to a still higher date, and shall endeavour to prove it written on a prior occasion, namely his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter.

SECTION II.

THE OCCASION OF THIS POEM.

THE next important object of enquiry then, is the occasion on which this poem was composed. That it was a nuptial poem is, I think, universally admitted, and cannot with any appearance of reason be denied. That it was during or soon after the marriage solemnity is, I conceive, fairly inferable from several passages ; as when the virgins are invited to behold king Solomon in his nuptial crown, the crown wherewith his mother

tower of Lebanon, chap. vii. 4. But it is not certain that the tower of Lebanon was the same as the house of the forest of Lebanon, 1 Kings, vii. 2. (See my note on ch. vii. 4.) nor is it certain that all these were built in succession ; so that the temple, and his palace at Jerusalem, were both complete before the house at Lebanon was begun. Much less does Mr. WHISTON's remark upon *Amminadab*'s being the same as *Abinadab*, merit much attention, since they are evidently different names, and were most likely different persons ; or rather the former two Hebrew words compounded into a proper name by mistake. (See the note on ch. vi. 12.) Chariots also were introduced before the reign of Solomon. See 2 Sam. xv. 1.—1 Kings, i. 5.

crowned him in the day of his espousals which it is not likely was worn long after the nuptials ; and when they are directed to behold the bridal bed, or palanquin, brought up in state to the palace. The same deduction may be made from other passages—‘ The king hath brought me into his apartments—the king is waiting in the galleries,’ &c.

The only marriage of Solomon, which is particularly noticed in the scriptures, is that with Pharaoh’s daughter, and to this occasion has the piece before us generally been referred¹. Several objections have indeed been made to this supposition; but all of them, when examined, appear to me arguments in its favour, rather than objections.

It has been said, that the nature of the fortune which this princess brought to Solomon is inconsistent with the supposition of her being Pharaoh’s daughter. The portion alluded to is a *vineyard* which yielded a thousand pieces of silver, and this is thought inconsistent with the character of an Egyptian princess. But the sacred historian happily settles this difficulty, by informing us that

¹ Dr. *Croxall*, in the preface to his *Fair Circassian*, refers to a small Arabian MSS. found in a marble chest in the ruins of Palmyra, and mentioned (as he says) in the *Philosophical Transactions of Amsterdam*, 1558, and deposited in the university of Leyden ; which MSS. he tells us, contains memoirs of the court and seraglio of Solomon ; and mentions a beautiful Circassian captive, with whose charms Solomon was so enraptured, that he never left the seraglio for a month after she was brought there ; but as all the parts of this story bear evident marks of fiction, and were not, I suppose, intended to be believed, I conceive it unnecessary to answer it particularly.

Pharaoh gave his daughter a portion which very well agrees with our supposition, and was probably the vineyard here referred to : for the Hebrews did not confine the term to plantations of the vine, but extended it to any kind of plantations, either of fruit-trees or odoriferous shrubs¹. Now the inspired writer tells us that Pharaoh, king of Egypt, having ‘ gone up and taken Gezer, burnt it with fire, slew the Canaanites that dwelt there, and gave it for a *present unto his daughter, Solomon’s wife*’²; and Solomon built Gezer. Now this Gezer is supposed by RELAND³, apparently with good reason, to have been the same as Gazara, in the neighbourhood of Joppa; and the latter is described by JOSEPHUS⁴ as a fruitful country, and abounding with springs of water. Mr. WOOD, describing the valley of Bocat, in which stand the magnificent ruins of Balbec, compares it with the fertile plain of Rama, on the borders of which Gazara or Gadara is situated. Now as Gazara was probably the ancient Gaza, it is likely that Balbec might be in or near the ancient Baal-hammon. If so, there is the more propriety in the comparison between the two spots.

The bride’s mother being supposed to have an apartment within the palace of Solomon⁵ is another circumstance that has been thought utterly

¹ Harmer on Sol. Song: p. 34. See ch. i. 14: vii. 12:

² 1 Kings ix. 16, 17.

³ Palæst. p. 778.

⁴ Antiq. lib. viii. cap. vi. sect. 1.

⁵ Ch. iii. 4.

inconsistent with the supposition of the bride's being the daughter of the king of Egypt¹; but if this be part of the relation of a dream, as I think, with Dr. DODERLEIN, there is good reason to conclude, this objection vanishes: or, even, without supposing this, I know not that we have sufficient proof from the modern etiquette of eastern princesses, but that the mother of Solomon's queen (especially if somewhat in years) might be suffered to accompany her daughter on the occasion of so grand an alliance; and if she were, there is no doubt but she would be honoured with apartments in the palace.

As to the supposed hint, that this lady was one of the daughters of Jerusalem, *i. e.* an inhabitant of that city; as it rests on a forced translation of no authority, it does not require a particular answer². But the bride's coming up from the wilderness is another circumstance which merits observation; since when the sacred writers speak indefinitely of the wilderness³, without specifying any wilderness in particular, it appears that they always intend the great wilderness between Judea

¹ Notes to Dr. Percy's Trans. p. 86. and Dr. Hodgson on Sol. Song.

² The middle thereof wrought [in needle work] by her 'whom he loveth [best] among the daughters of Jerusalem.' See chap. iii. 10. in the following translation, and Dr. Percy's notes, p. 67, 8.

³ Chap. iii. 6. viii. 5.

and Egypt'; and therefore intimates the bride's coming from that quarter: and the additional circumstance of Solomon going out to meet her, strongly intimates that she was a princess of the first rank.

Bishop PERCY indeed insinuates, as a difficulty, that the bride is called a *prince's*, and not a *king's* daughter; whereas the kings of Egypt were certainly of the highest rank and greatest consequence. The original term, however, appears to be general²; for all kings are princes, though all princes are not kings; and we certainly mean no disparagement to our sovereigns, when we call them 'princes of the house of Brunswick.' It is not clear, however, but the passage alluded to may be a compliment to the lady's mental charms, since the Hebrew idiom has induced some respectable critics to render the expression, 'O princely daughter'—O lady of a noble and excellent disposition, and character; and it may be worthy of remark that the corresponding Greek word³, signifying *benefactor*, was assumed as a surname of the highest honour by a later Egyptian monarch, *Ptolomy Euergetes*, and other princes.

Another objection to the bride's being an Egyptian princess has been drawn from her complaint, that her mother's children had been severe unto

¹ See Deut. xi. 24.

² See 1 Sam. ii. 8.—Prov. xxv. 7. compared with ver. 6, &c.

³ *Euergetēs*.

her, and had made her keeper of the vineyards. If she were a younger sister, and distinguished by her wit and beauty, it is not wonderful that she should have been envied and hated by them : though by being made keeper of the vineyards, there is no reason to understand any thing more than sending her to a country seat, intended by the vineyards, as if she had been to look after them, and by this means exposing her to the fervour of the sun-beams, in which she had neglected her beauty, which is what I understand literally by her *vineyard*—a familiar metaphorical expression used for any kind of employment which required care and management.

Mr. HENLEY¹ thinks it an important and unanswerable objection to the bride's being an Egyptian lady, that pastoral images are employed; for shepherds, we know, were 'an abomination to the Egyptians²;' and that because, as *Jonathan*, in his Targum, observes, 'The Hebrews ate what the Egyptians worshipped.' But, not to say that some revolution of sentiment might take place in the course of several centuries; as the same country had once a race of *shepherd kings*: Not to insist on this, it is to be observed, that the author of the poem is not supposed to be an Egyptian; and as to the lady herself, it is generally believed that she was a proselyte to the worship of JEHOVAH, before her marriage: and there is this apparent good reason for it, that she

¹ In Lowth's Lect.

² Gen. xlv. 34.

is evidently distinguished from those wives which turned away Solomon's heart, to the idols of their respective nations, among whom those of Egypt are neither named nor hinted at¹ : now admitting her to be a convert to Judaism, this objection is completely obviated.

On the other hand, I think, there are some images employed, beside those already named, that strongly favour our idea, that the bride was Pharaoh's daughter, and the allusions to Pharaoh's horses and his chariots appear to me clearly of that number.



SECTION III.

OF THE NATURE OF THE POEM.

LET us now examine the nature of the composition considered as poetic. The Jews allow this book to be so far poetic, as being of the parabolic kind, but not metrical : wherefore they have not distinguished it with their *poetic accents* ; nor is it ever written by them in a versified form, as the psalms are². This, however, is merely the effect of their ignorance, since the book carries with it every character (except in the points) belonging to Hebrew poesy, and is now fully admitted to be such by bishop Lowth, and the best He-

¹ 1 Kings xi. 1—8.

² Lowth's Prelect. Lect. XVIII.

bræans. Indeed, if the ideas given in the former essay, on the nature of Hebrew poetry, be right, the fact is incontrovertible; and if they be not right, we have yet to seek the nature of the Hebrew poetry.

It has been somewhat disputed among the critics, whether this poem is to be reckoned a PASTORAL or not: but this is little more than a dispute about terms. If *Theocritus* and *Virgil* are to be made the standard of this species of composition, it certainly will not endure the test of criticism: but the most excellent writers in any style can hardly be supposed to have been the first: and the laws of Hebrew pastoral are only to be drawn from writers in that language; I mean from the sacred writers, who frequently mixed with images strictly pastoral, others derived from different sources; as we see in the twenty-third psalm, the finest pastoral in that language. And the introduction of images borrowed from royalty, intermixed with the affairs of shepherds¹, are so far from improper or inconsistent, that I think there is a peculiar beauty in their being mingled or united. The most splendid objects were simple in their origin, and from the pastoral life were probably borrowed all the ancient insignia of royalty. For instance, a shepherd was a king or ruler of his sheep; and a good king the shepherd of his people. The office of government is compared to that of feeding flocks, be-

¹ Harmer p. 24

cause it should be exercised for the public good. The sceptre of the monarch is borrowed from the shepherd's staff, and his crown, perhaps, was but an improvement of the shepherd's garland. These analogies very sufficiently justify the intermixture of images which have been unjustly deemed incongruous¹. And, I am inclined to think, the neglect of this circumstance has led commentators into improper methods of interpretation : and that by the bridegroom's feeding among the lilies, &c. is literally intended the exercise of his regal government with equity and moderation ; as the going forth by the footsteps of the flock is a figurative term for obedience, and the following good examples.

If the term *EPITHALAMIUM* is to be taken for a poem sung to the new-married couple in the nuptial bed, it cannot be applied to this song² ; but if taken in a larger sense for a nuptial poem only, I see no great impropriety in such an application.

The question whether this be a *DRAMATIC* piece, is of a similar nature. Taking the term

¹ Mr. *Harmer* hints that only two verses at most are pastoral ; but this surely is a mistake ; for wherever the speakers talk of woods and mountains, fields and gardens, roes and gazels—wherever they speak of feeding among lilies, &c. are not all these images borrowed from the pastoral, or first simple state of rural life ? So Dr. *Blair* observes, ‘ The Song of Songs affords us a high exemplification of pastoral poetry.—It is a dramatic pastoral, or a perpetual dialogue between personages in the character of shepherds ; and, suitably to that form, it is full of rural and pastoral images from beginning to end.’ *Blair's Lect.* vol. III. *Lect.* XLI.

² *Harmer*, p. 3.

dramatic in a theatrical sense, it will certainly not apply : but taking it in a laxer sense for a poem by way of dialogue, it is very proper ; and though there be strictly no dramatic plot, yet there are successive scenes and poetical machinery. The *persons* of this drama are for the most part easily distinguishable in the original language, which has a difference of gender in the verbs, as well as nouns and pronouns. *Origen*, who has been followed by all succeeding commentators, distinguishes the bride and bridegroom—the virgins attendant on the bride, and the companions of the bridegroom.

Mr. HARMER, however, thinks he has discovered *two* brides, the daughter of Pharaoh; and a Jewish lady, who had been married to Solomon prior to the other, and was provoked to jealousy by these nuptials ; and this opinion certainly deserves examination in respect to its ingenious author, though I know not that he made a single convert to his opinion.

Mr. Harmer's first and grand reason is—that this bride, in chap. iii. appears to have been accustomed to the bed of Solomon, because she sought him there : ‘ By night on my bed I sought him ; ’ which seems inconsistent with the modesty of a new married lady, and with his hypothesis, that the marriage is not consummated till the fourth chapter. When we come to that passage, I shall attempt to show the latter notion to be unfounded : in the mean time, if the language of the spouse be only a dream, as I shall endeavour

to prove, it will afford but a very weak support for his conclusion.

That Solomon was married before his alliance with Pharaoh's daughter, and even before his accession to the crown, should appear by the age of Rehoboam, his son and successor¹; but that his first wife was ever crowned, or that she was alive at this period, or even at his accession, are mere uncertain suppositions, and therefore ought not to be employed in argument.

As to the jealous language which Mr. Harmer thought he could perceive in the sequel of the poem, I can attribute it to nothing but the influence of hypothesis, which is very apt to give a colour to all our views of a subject; and if the reader turns to the passages he points out², as I have done, I think he will see as little of it.

That the lady celebrated in chapter vii. is called a prince's daughter, and not the king's (as in Ps. xlv.) has been shewn to be an objection of little consequence. The result then of our last enquiry in connexion with the preceding is, that the lady here celebrated was probably a daughter of Pharaoh, lately married to Solomon; and that there is no reason to suppose two wives of Solomon, introduced, or particularly referred to, in this poem.

Having so far settled the *dramatis personæ*, or persons of the dialogue, our next enquiry respects

¹ See 1 Kings xiv. 21. compared with chap. xi. 42.

² Chap. ii. 1, 5. iii. 1.

the time, *i. e.* the dramatic time of the piece; and the change of scenery.

The Jewish weddings commonly lasted seven days, as appears in the instances of Jacob and Samson¹. From this circumstance the ingenious bishop BOSSUET suggested that the poem should be divided into seven parts, analogous to these days, and he has been followed by many later writers; particularly by the anonymous author of a very ingenious paraphrase on this song². He, however, varies several of the divisions, as I conceive with great judgment, and with good reason, and I was pleased to find, upon making more than one attempt to divide it myself, merely by internal marks, that I fell almost exactly into his divisions; which strongly inclines me to this hypothesis.

We know that the marriages of the ancient Hebrews were attended with music and dancing, as are the eastern marriages to this day; and there can be no doubt but these accompanied the nuptials of Pharaoh's daughter; but whether this poem, or any parts of it³, as Mr. Harmer suggests, were thus sung, it seems impossible to ascertain with certainty, however probable it may appear from some circumstances.

Gen. xxix. 27. Judges xiv. 10, 17.

² Edinburgh, printed 1775.

³ Ch. i. 1. &c. iv. 1—11.

SECTION IV.

OF THE IMAGERY EMPLOYED IN THIS SONG.

MY object in this section will be two-fold:
1st. To shew that the images employed are quite
in the style of the best eastern writers; and 2dly,
That they are not justly chargeable with indeli-
cacy or licentiousness.

Sir W. JONES will be admitted one of the best
judges of the eastern style. He tells us, ‘ the
‘ *Arabian* poets compare the foreheads of their
‘ mistresses to the *morning*¹; their *locks* to the
‘ night; their faces to the *sun*, to the *moon*, or
‘ to the blossoms of jasmine; their *cheeks* to roses
‘ or *ripe-fruit*²; their *teeth* to pearls, hail-stones,
‘ and snow-drops; their *eyes* to the flowers of the
‘ narcissus; their *curled hair* to *black* scorpions,
‘ and to hyacinths; their *lips* to rubies, or to
‘ wine; the form of their *breasts* to *pomegranates*,
‘ and the colour of them to snow; their shape to
‘ that of the *palm tree*³; and their *stature* to that
‘ of a cypress, *palm*⁴, &c.

In the above quotation I have marked with
italics both the features described, and the images

¹ See Sol. Song, ch. vi. 10.

² Ch. iv. 3.

³ Ch. vii. 7, 8.

⁴ Essay on the poetry of the Easterns.

employed; with some references in the margin, to the passages of this song, where similar images occur; and I shall pursue the same method in the following extracts.

The following is an extract from a literal translation by Sir W. Jones of a 'TURKISH ODE, by 'MESHI'.'

'Thou hearest the tale of the *nightingale*, that
'the *vernal season approaches*². The spring has
'spread a bower of joy in every grove, where the
'almond-tree sheds its silver blossoms.

'The roses and tulips are like the bright cheeks
'of beautiful maids, in whose ears the pearls hang
'like drops of dew.

'*The time is passed* in which the plants were
'sick, and the rose-bud hung its thoughtful head
'upon its bosom.'

Lady Montague, in her tour in the east, met with a TURKISH LOVE SONG, which struck her as remarkably resembling, in its style, the canticle of the king of Israel. Mr. Harmer has copied the whole, and I shall transcribe so much of it as appears to our purpose.

'The nightingale now wanders in the vines;
'her passion is to seek roses.

'*I went down to admire the beauty of the*
'*vines*³ ∴ the sweetness of your charms bath ra-
'vished my soul⁴.

¹ Asiatic Poems.

³ Ch. vi. 11, 12. vii. 12.

² Sol. Song, ii. 11, 12.

Ch. iv. 9.

‘ Your *eyes* are *black* and *lovely* ; but wild and
 ‘ disdainful as those of a stag.

‘ The wretched Ibrahim sighs in these verses ;
 ‘ *one dart from your eyes hath pierced through*
 ‘ *my heart*’.

‘ Ah, Sultana ! STAG-EYED : an angel among
 ‘ angels ! I desire, and my desire remains unsa-
 ‘ tisfied.

‘ *Turn to me, Sultana !—let me gaze on thy*
 ‘ *beauty*’.

‘ Adieu—I go down to the grave : If thou call-
 ‘ est me, I return.

‘ *My heart is hot as sulphur ; sigh, and it*
 ‘ *will flame.*’³

On this song I will subjoin two observations ;
 the first is from Mr. Harmer, that ‘ the passion of
 ‘ the nightingale is to seek roses,’ alludes to a
 popular Arabian fable of the amours of the night-
 ingale and the rose.—The second is a criticism
 of Sir W. Jones⁴, on the epithet STAG-EYED
 in the translation of this song : he supposes
 the original [ahû chesm] to intend the eyes of a
 young fawn⁵—the same as the GAZEL of the Ara-
 bians, and the ZABI of the Hebrews. ‘ I have
 ‘ seen one (says Sir William,) it is exquisitely
 ‘ beautiful ; with eyes uncommonly black and

¹ Ch. iv. 9.

² Ch. vi. 13.

³ Ch. viii. 6.

⁴ Essay on Eastern Poetry.

⁵ *Ελπίδα*, fawn-eyed. Pers. Gram. p. 71.

‘ large :—The Turks mean to express *fulness*,
 ‘ with a *soft* and *languishing lustre*.’

The above are sufficient to give an idea of the eastern taste in poetic composition ; and the similitude between these images and Solomon’s, is too obvious to be insisted on. In the critical notes to the commentary, however, I may subjoin some other passages from the easterns to illustrate the text.

I come now to justify the language of my author from the charges of immodesty and indelicacy. In order to which I must submit to the consideration of my readers, *the difference between the manners and customs of different nations*, particularly in the *east* and *west*. Many of the Mosaic laws and regulations respecting women, sound very indelicately to the ears of English ladies, and are certainly very improper to be read in our religious assemblies, or in mixed companies ; but does this fix the stain of immodesty on the Jewish legislator ? Certainly not ; the legal code of the Hindoos contains many of the same laws, quite as *naturally* expressed ; and so do those of other eastern nations. On the other hand, *our* laws, in many cases, demand that kind of evidence from injured females, in an open court, which would by no means be required by an eastern judge. Also many liberties between the sexes, which, from their intermixture in conversation are thought innocent with us, would be esteemed highly criminal in Turkey and other parts of the *east*. ‘ The promiscuous dancing of the two sexes,’ for instance,

so fashionable in Europe, is viewed with 'horror' by the Turks ; and an European ball is an object of disgust and detestation to Musselmen¹.—I may add that the Hebrew language, in its ancient state, wants words for many indelicate and offensive objects named by us without hesitation².

It is also to be observed that even in the same country, in different periods, the same expressions are either modest or indelicate. As a nation proceeds in luxury and refinement, the language is also refined, while the manners, perhaps, grow more licentious. This has been particularly the case with us. I doubt not but the passages excepted against in our translation of this very poem appeared modest enough to our translators, who were grave and learned men : and though this certainly is not the case at present, who will say that the morals of the nation are not more relaxed than in the reign of Elizabeth and James I ? To instance in one circumstance, I doubt not but our ladies were as modest when they wore their bosoms exposed, as they are at present ; and then I suppose the description of this feature appeared no more indelicate than now the description of a female face. Such appear to be the ideas of the eastern poets above referred to by Sir W. Jones ; and even the colder poets of the north, who are neither chargeable with lewd intentions nor unchaste expressions.

¹ Niebuhr's Travels, vol. I. p. 140.

² The Hebrew has no word for *urine*, but calls it the *water of the feet* ; nor have they any literal term for those sexual distinctions which our modest writers generally name in Latin.

In the celebrated poems of OSSIAN, which, whether genuine or not, were certainly faithful copies of the manners of the age and country, we have the following images ; one of which is the same as Solomon's :

‘ Thy breasts are like two smooth rocks seen
‘ from Banno of the streams.

‘ Lovely with her *raven hair* is the white-bo-
‘ som’d daughter of Songlan¹.

‘ Her white-breast heaves like snow on the
‘ heath, when the gentle winds arise and slowly
‘ move it in the night².

‘ Her breasts are like foam on the waves, and
‘ her eyes like the stars of light : *her hair was as*
‘ *the raven’s wing*³

He must be a fastidious critic indeed, that condemns these beautiful images as licentious or immodest. Yet I know nothing in the Song of Solomon more licentious, and impassioned. The two descriptions of the bride and bridegroom will here perhaps rush into the reader’s recollection, especially the former, and make it necessary for me to explain and remove some expressions, which, as they stand in our translation, I can by no means justify.

The translation of the Bible is indeed so important and valuable a work, and the translators were such good and learned men, that I feel pain in finding fault with either : yet as they were but

¹ Fingal, book I.

² Battle of Lora.

³ Carthon. Compare Sol. Song, ch. v. 11.

men, and laid no claim to inspiration or infallibility, it conveys no censure to say that they sometimes erred. In the present instance I have shewn that part of their error must be laid to the state of our language and manners near two centuries ago; and another part to the state of learning at that period. Literature, it must be recollected, was then but just awakened from a slumber of a thousand years. The Hebrew language was very imperfectly understood, and less was known of the Hebrew poetry. The attention of our reformers and translators was drawn to objects of more immediate importance, and confined, in a great measure, to the subjects controverted between them and the church of Rome. Thus much at least must be admitted in their apology. Let us now advert to the very indelicate description they have given us of the spouse in the beginning of the seventh chapter.

If the reader will please to compare my translation of this passage with the common one (neither of which I think it necessary to transcribe here) he will at once perceive the grand difference to be, that what they refer to the *naked features*, I refer to the *dress*; which I hope takes off at once the grand objection of its indelicacy. For the import of the individual words and phrases, I must refer to my critical notes: in defence of the *general idea*, I must beg leave to argue from the following topics.

1. From the nature of the case. Waving the divine authority of the book, and supposing only

(which surely cannot be disputed) that the author was a man of sense and genius, would he represent the bride as describing her beloved *naked* to the virgins, that they might know him¹ ? Surely not : much less would he represent the virgins as describing the *naked* charms of the bride ; the supposition is against nature, reason, and probability ; to say nothing of decency and morals.

2. Let us compare this with other ancient poems, and particularly with the forty-fifth psalm which appears also to have been a nuptial poem, and, probably, written on the same occasion. Here the parties are described in their royal or nuptial garments² ; the queen especially, as clothed in wrought gold, and needle-work : nor is there any passage in the writings which compose our Bible analogous to this, supposing it to refer to the uncovered features.

3. Let us examine the internal evidence, and we shall find several circumstances which can be referred only to the dress, particularly in the description of the bride. The first article of the description, for instance, is the feet, which are described, not naked, but clothed with sandals³, which strongly favours our idea. The next is, most literally and obviously, the covering of the thighs or loins. The head also is described in a manner which can be referred only to the dress : ‘Thine head UPON THEE is like CARMEL.’ Now

¹ Ch. v. 2—16.² Ver. 8, 9, 13, 14.³ Ch. vii. 1.

Carmal was a mountain covered with trees and verdure, no doubt intermixed with flowers, which can refer to nothing but the head-dress, or rather the nuptial crown formed of flowers and evergreens.—So again, in the description of the beloved—‘ his body like white ivory overlaid with ‘ sapphires,’ I am much mistaken if this does not more naturally describe a white skin with a sapphire robe, or perhaps robes of blue and white, than it does the skin with blue veins.

4. If we recur to authorities, those in favour of my hypothesis are, at least, equally respectable with those on the other side. Among the rabbins, Aben Ezra ¹ was an advocate for this method of interpretation, and among Christian writers I have noted Sanctius, Poole, Bishop Patrick, and Dr. Gill. Mr. Harmer hath pleaded on the same side, with much ingenuity, and he is followed by Mr. Parkhurst.

5. It may be thought extraordinary by some mere English readers, that there should be a doubt or a difficulty upon this subject, and they may wish to be informed whence the ambiguity arises. To gratify such I would reply, partly from the nature of the Hebrew language, which denominates the articles of dress from the members of the body which they cover : and partly from the nature of poetry, which abounds in tropes and metonymies ; and often becomes obscure by that conciseness which is essential to its elegance.

¹ In Gill, ch. vii. 1.

If it be enquired, How are we to distinguish the parts clothed from the naked features ? I answer not only by the expressions used, but also by the nature of the case, and the customs of the country ; but the application of this rule must be referred to the commentary.

The beauty of Solomon's imagery has been a subject of encomium with many writers, and particularly with the ingenious and elegant Bossuet : but if the reader have not taste to discern these, it would be in vain to point them out : it would be like pointing a blind man to the rainbow. We hasten therefore to the next, and one of the most important subjects of enquiry.



SECTION V.

THE MYSTICAL SENSE OF THE POEM.

IT was a very early and general opinion among both Jews and Christians, who studied this book, that the author had something more in view than a literal reference to a beloved fair one, under the amatory expressions and figurative images employed ; but they have differed very much in their methods of explication.

The learned Mr. *Poole*¹ mentions some writers who have conjectured the author's design to be

¹ In Syn. Crit. vol. II. col. 1963.

political, intended as an encomium on the government of Solomon ; or as one says, ‘ A dialogue ‘ between Solomon and the republic of the Jews ‘ (personified as a female beauty) inviting him to ‘ reign over it !’—Others have understood it as a philosophico-allegorical colloquy between the above prince and wisdom, or divine philosophy, according to his supposed language in the Apocrypha : ‘ I loved her, and sought her out from my ‘ youth ; I desired to make her my spouse, [or, to ‘ marry her,] and I was a lover of her beauty¹.’—This, according to Dupin², was the hypothesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia ; and both these expositions are, it must be confessed, ingenious and beautiful ; but as I believe it is long since they had any advocates, I do not think it necessary to examine them.

The Targum, and several of the Jewish commentators, as Eben Ezra, Solomon Jarchi, and the author of the Book of Zohar³, consider this book as an historical parable, or mystical history of the ancient Jewish church : on the other hand some Christian writers, as Brightman and Cotton, consider it as prophetic of the Christian church : and some have been so minute⁴ as to point out the several periods to which it may be referred,

¹ Wisdom, viii. 2, &c.

² Hist. Eccl. Cent. 5.

³ This book tells us that Solomon's Song comprehends the whole law, the creation, the slavery of Israel in Egypt, the Exodus, the covenant of Sinai, building the temple, captivity and redemption of Israel, &c. &c. and finally the Sabbath of the Lord, which is, and was, and is to come,

⁴ Hermischius in Gill.

answerable to the states of the seven Asiatic churches, in the revelation, which they also suppose to be prophetical, as follows :

1	The Church at Ephesus, Rev. ii.	1 to 7.	Cant. i.	5 to 17.	A. D.	33 to 370.
2.	_____ Smyrna	— —	8—11.	— ii.	1—17.	— 371 — 707.
3.	_____ Pergamos	— —	12—17.	— iii.	1—11.	— 708 — 1045.
4.	_____ Thyatira	— —	18—29.	— iv.	1—v.	1. — 1046—1383.
5.	_____ Sardis	— iii.	1—6.	— v.	2—vi.	2. — 1384—1721.
6.	_____ Philadelphia	— —	7—13.	— vi.	9—vii.	14. — 1722—2059.
7.	_____ Laodicea	— —	14—22.	— viii.	1—14.	— 2060 & onward

These suppositions are so fanciful and unfounded, that I confess myself at a loss how to attempt an answer ; and shall therefore leave them with the censure of Dr. GILL¹, who observes that ‘ hereby the book is made liable to arbitrary, ‘ groundless, and uncertain conjectures, as well ‘ as its usefulness in a great measure laid aside.’

There is one other hypothesis which I would name rather out of respect to the talents of its author, than from any idea of its plausibility ; I mean that of the late ingenious Mr. ROBINSON of Cambridge, who thinks it ‘ not improbable’ that the book of Canticles is a ‘ topographical composition,’ descriptive, ‘ of some beautiful spots in ‘ the landed estates of Solomon² ;’ and that, particularly, the description of the beloved in chap. v. intends nothing but a *mountain*, ornamented with copses, and enriched with quarries of marble, and a mine of gold³.

It is readily admitted that geography borrows many of its terms from the members of the human

¹ Expos. p. 16. 3d edit.

² History of Baptism, ch. iii. p. 23, 4.

³ Ibid.

body, as an arm of the sea, the mouth of a river, the foot of a mountain, &c. and this custom probably originated among the first fathers of mankind. But that Behemoth meant the Dead Sea, Leviathan a volcano, Jonah's whale a Jewish fishery, and the beloved in this book a hill with mines in it, are ideas which require something more than mere conjecture to support them. Beside, whoever heard of a gold mine in Judea? and if Solomon had such in his own estate, why send a three years voyage to procure it? Farther, did marble and gold grow in the same mountain? And did it also produce quarries of *ivory*, and sapphire, and beryl? Did the same mountain produce springs of water, beds of spices, and corses 'bushy' and black as a raven?' Surely the idea is too ridiculous to merit a serious confutation, and could not have been entertained even by Mr. Robinson, if he had attempted to pursue it farther, and examine the particular application of his hypothesis. For supposing a few passages might be thus illustrated, the far greater part would be thrown into impenetrable darkness.

I know not whether the protestant reader will bear with my adding to the above hypotheses, the mystical one of some modern catholics, who while they explain the bridegroom to be Jesus Christ, make the spouse to be the Virgin Mary¹.

It is now time to state what I conceive a far

¹ *Explication of Cant. in Verse.* Paris, 1717.

more rational and consistent application of the imagery in this poem, and to consider the grounds and arguments on which it rests. ‘ In the first place, then, I confess’ (in the words of the very learned bishop LOWTH¹) ‘ that by several reasons, by the general authority and consent of the Jewish and Christian churches, and still more, by the nature and analogy of the parabolic style, I feel *irresistibly inclined* to that side of the question which considers this as an *entire ALLEGORY*.’— ‘ A *mystic allegory* of that sort which induces a more sublime sense on historical truths, and which, by the description of human events, shadows out divine circumstances.’ So Dr. BLAIR says, ‘ Considered with respect to its spiritual meaning it is undoubtedly a mystical allegory².’—On this occasion, says Mr. GREEN, we may say what the apostle says on another ; ‘ No man can lay any other foundation than what is laid, even Jesus Christ³.’

The ground of a mystic allegory lays in the analogy between natural and spiritual objects ; and it is well known to have been the doctrine of Plato’s school, that all material objects had their archetype in the divine mind, which principle was adopted by Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, and from him descended to the Cabbalists, and became the fountain of all their allegorical interpretations. These Cabbalists, from the maxim that ‘ sensible things are but an imitation of things above,’

Lecture XXXI.

² Lect. XLI. vol. III.

Greens Poet. Parts of O. T. newly translated, p. 106.

thence conceived that the matrimonial union had its counterpart, or original pattern, in the heavenly state; namely, in the loves of TIPHERET and MALCUTH, the invisible bridegroom and bride of the celestial world. By TIPHERET, which signifies *ornament* or *beauty*, if they understood themselves, they must have meant the king Messiah, whom they call ‘the *second* Adam,’ or the ‘Adam who is *on high*,’ in distinction from our common father; and by MALCUTH, which signifies *kingdom*, the congregation of Israel or the kingdom of the Messiah; and these notions appear to have been very ancient, as they are adopted by the sacred writers, and particularly by St. Paul, who represents Jesus Christ, both as ‘the second Adam, the Lord from heaven,’ and as the husband or bridegroom of his church¹.

But this notion may be traced to a sublimer origin than Plato, namely, to the Hebrew prophets, who abound with the same ideas. By them ‘God is represented as the spouse of the church, and the church as the betrothed of God. Thus also the piety of the people, their impiety, their idolatry, and rejection stand in the same relation to the sacred covenant, as chastity, immodesty, adultery, and divorce, with respect to the marriage contract. And this notion is so familiar in Scripture, that the word *adultery* (or whoredom) is commonly used to denote idolatrous worship,

¹ 1 Cor. xv. Eph. v. 32.

‘ and so appropriated does it appear to this metaphorical purpose, that it very seldom occurs in its proper and literal sense¹.’

Some of the passages thus certainly allegorical have a resemblance so striking to the Song of Solomon, that the comparison has great weight with me, to prove *that* also to be allegorical: I shall produce a few instances for the satisfaction of the reader, and many more will be alluded, or referred to in the subsequent commentary.

The most striking instance is that of the 45th psalm, which is commonly supposed to have been written on the same occasion. If so, it could not be written by David, because he appears to have died before this marriage; nor yet by Solomon, because the writer speaks of him (a type of King Messiah) as a third person, and tells us his poem was composed to be recited in his presence, at least as I understand the first verse, which runs thus:

‘ My heart enditeth a good matter;
‘ I will speak unto the king that which I have composed;
‘ My tongue [shall be as] the pen of a ready writer.

It is probable then, it might be written by the prophet Nathan, the author of the beautiful parable which reproved David’s sin². However, there is so striking a resemblance between the opening

¹ Lowth’s Lect. XXXI.

² 2 Sam. xii. 1. &c.

of this psalm and that of an ancient runic poem¹, that I cannot help observing it. The bard it seems had been taken captive by the enemy, and composed an ode in praise of the conqueror, as the price of his ransom; whence the poem is called 'The Ransom of EGILL, the *scald*,' or bard, and begins thus: 'I bring in my bosom the gift of Odin [*i. e.* the god Woden] my mind is deep laden with the songs of the gods.

'I offer my freight unto the king: I owe a poem for my ransom: my lays resound his praise.'

The following verses will also find their parallel in the same and other psalms.

'The drawn bow twangs: it sends forth *the* arrow to meet *the* sword. The king hath gained a firm possession in the enemy's land. *Praise dwells beside him.*

'*I have published the praises of the king: I have poured forth from my breast the praises of Eric.*'

Begging the reader's pardon for this digression, I shall now recite some other verses in this psalm, referring to the parallel passages in the Song of Solomon. Of the king it is said:

'Thou art *fairer* than the children of men:

'Grace is poured into thy lips.²

The following words seem to allude to the chariot of state described by Solomon, and allegorically expressive of the gospel.

'On thy word of truth, of meekness, and of righteousness, ride prosperously.'

¹ See five pieces of Runic Poetry, translated from the Islandic language. Dodsley, 1763.

² See Sol. Song, ch. v. 10, 13.

And in the next we have express mention of his perfumed garments:

‘ Myrrh, aloes and cassia perfume all thy garments.’

• But the description of the spouse is so strikingly similar to that of Solomon’s, that I think there can be little doubt that they are equally allegorical, and of the like import.

‘ Kings daughters are among thy honourable women :
 ‘ Upon thy right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.
 ‘ Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear :
 ‘ Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house :
 ‘ So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.
 ‘ The king’s daughter is all glorious within,
 ‘ Her clothing is of wrought gold,
 ‘ She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-
 ‘ work :
 ‘ The virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be
 ‘ brought unto thee :
 ‘ With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought :
 ‘ They shall enter into the king’s palace.’

Several passages interspersed with the above, demonstrate that this can refer to no mortal love ; but must be allegorically explained. The Chaldee paraphrast expressly applies the psalm to King Messiah, and so doth the apostle Paul : and the analogy between this and the Song of Solomon, strongly pleads for the like spiritual interpretation of that song.

ISAIAH employs imagery of the same kind in the like manner. To Zion he says,

‘ No more shall it be said unto thee, Thou forsaken !
 ‘ Neither to thy land shall it be said any more, Thou desolate !
 ‘ But thou shalt be called, The object of my delight ;
 ‘ And thy land The wedded matron :
 ‘ For JEHOVAH shall delight in thee ;
 ‘ And thy land shall be joined in marriage.

‘ For as a young man weddeth a virgin,
 ‘ So shall thy restorer wed thee :
 ‘ And as a bridegroom rejoiceth in his bride,
 ‘ So shall thy God rejoice in thee¹.’

JEREMIAH and EZEKIEL both employ the same imagery : the latter with peculiar boldness, and in a manner more exposed to the fastidiousness of European criticism. I shall give a few verses that may serve to illustrate the imagery of Solomon.

‘ I clothed thee with embroidered work,
 ‘ And shod thee with badger’s skin ;
 ‘ I girded thee about with fine linen,
 ‘ And covered thee with silk.
 ‘ I decked thee also with ornaments,
 ‘ And I put bracelets upon thine hands,
 ‘ And a chain upon thy neck,
 ‘ And I put a jewel on thy forehead,
 ‘ And earrings in thine ears,
 ‘ And a splendid crown upon thine head :
 ‘ Then wast thou decked with gold and silver ;
 ‘ And thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk,
 ‘ And of embroidered work.

.

‘ And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy
 ‘ beauty :
 ‘ For it was perfect, through my comeliness which I put
 ‘ upon thee,
 ‘ Saith thy God, JEHOVAH².’

The same kind of imagery occurs in the New Testament, though less ornamented and poetical. JESUS CHRIST calls himself the *bridegroom*, and

¹ Bishop Lowth’s Isa. chap. lxii. 4, 5. See also ch. liv, 6, 7.

² Ezek. xvi. 10—14. See Bp. Newcome’s version, and compare Lowth’s notes in Isa. iii. 21.

his disciples, *children of the bridechamber*¹. John the Baptist speaks of him in the same character, and calls himself the ‘ friend of the bridegroom².’ St. Paul, we have seen, employs the like figures. In the book of Revelation, the new Jerusalem is described as a bride adorned for her husband, and expressly called ‘ The bride, the lamb’s wife.’

These, and the like passages, are sufficient to shew that the metaphorical language of Solomon, *may* and *probably ought* to be interpreted in the same manner. The following considerations carry the matter farther.

It is generally admitted that the sacred canon was compiled and closed by Ezra.—Ezra was a prophet—now if Solomon’s Song had been a mere nuptial poem, or a carnal love-song, how are we to account for its admission into the sacred canon, and uninterrupted continuance there? For, though there have been formerly controversies among the Jews about the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, yet there never was any concerning this³. It deserves also to be considered, that this book was universally admitted in all the translations and ancient versions of the scriptures; and allegorically explained by the most ancient commentators. The ancient book of Zohar asserts that Solomon composed it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Chaldee Paraphrase has this title, ‘ The songs and hymns which Solomon, the prophet, the king

¹ Matt. ix. 14, 15.

² John iii. 29.

³ Gill’s Expos. p. 2. ‘ All the scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.’ Misnah, Tract Yadaim, quoted in Gill’s Expos. p. 2.

‘ of Israel, uttered in the spirit of prophecy before the Lord.’ And R. Aben Ezra, in the preface to his commentary, says, ‘ God forbid that the Song of Songs should be *written or understood* of things obscene ; but it is entirely *parabolical*, and had it not been of very great excellency, it had not been written in the catalogue of the holy scriptures¹.’

Agreeably to these sentiments, many of the rabbins, and of the fathers, wrote allegorical expositions of this book ; and though it must be confessed their applications were various, and often fanciful to the extreme, they all (with a very few exceptions) united in the general principle, that the book was allegorical. And Jews, as well as Christians, are of the same opinion to the present day. So Mr. DAVID LEVI, ‘ This poem is an entire allegory—and describes the conjugal union of God with the Jewish church.—This is the solemn compact so frequently celebrated by almost all the Jewish writers under the same image².’

To confirm this idea, I would add lastly, that this method of explication is perfectly congenial to the eastern taste. Sir JOHN CHARDIN says of the Persians, that ‘ the most serious of their poets treat of the sublimest mysteries of theology under the most licentious language, in the way of allegory, as Afez in his Kasels³.’

¹ Quoted in Gill's Exp. p. 2.

² Heb. Eng. Dict. שלש.

³ Quoted in Lowth's Lect. XXXI.

The Kasels (or Ghazels) of Afez (or Hafez) are, literally taken, *Anacreontics*; but *Feridoun* and other Turkish commentators, understand ‘the terms of *love* and *wine* as expressing the transports of a soul devoutly attached to heaven.’ The eastern writers, and in particular the *Gen-toos*, adopt many mystical expressions of this nature, and talk of being *inebriated* with divine love, &c. It has been, indeed, suspected, that the eastern poets, who indulged themselves in licentious compositions, endeavoured to throw a *veil of mystery* over them, to conceal their shame: this might sometimes be the case; but the austere and exemplary life of Hafez pleads strongly in his favour¹.

But I cannot do justice to this subject without subjoining the following interesting extract from Sir W. JONES’s very curious and learned essay on ‘the mystical poetry of the Persians and Hindus²,’ which is so complete as to supercede all farther enquiries on the subject.

‘A figurative mode of expressing the fervour of devotion, or the ardent love of created spirits toward their beneficent Creator, has prevailed from time immemorial in Asia; particularly among the Persian theists, both ancient *Hushangis* and modern *Sufis*, who seem to have borrowed it from the Indian philosophers of the *Vedanta* school; and their doctrines are also believed to be the source of that sublime, but

¹ *Richardson’s Specimen of Pers. Poetry.* Note, p. 15.

² *Asiatic Researches*, p. 353 & seq. or *Works*, vol. I. p. 445.

‘ poetical, theology, which glows and sparkles in
 ‘ the writings of the old academics.—‘ Plato tra-
 ‘ velled into Italy and Egypt, says *Claude Fleury*,
 ‘ to learn the theology of the Pagans at its foun-
 ‘ tain head :’ its true fountain, however, was nei-
 ‘ ther in Italy nor in Egypt, (though considerable
 ‘ streams of it had been conducted thither by Py-
 ‘ thagoras, and by the family of Misra) but in
 ‘ Persia or India, which the founder of the Italic
 ‘ sect had visited with a similar design. What
 ‘ the Grecian travellers learned among the sages
 ‘ of the east, may perhaps be fully explained in
 ‘ another dissertation ; but we confine this essay
 ‘ to a singular species of poetry, which consists
 ‘ almost wholly of a mystical religious allegory,
 ‘ though it seems, on a transient view, to contain
 ‘ only the sentiments of a wild and voluptuous li-
 ‘ bertinism : now, admitting the danger of a poeti-
 ‘ cal style, in which the limits between vice and
 ‘ enthusiasm are so minute as to be hardly distin-
 ‘ guishable, we must allow it to be natural, though
 ‘ a warm imagination may carry it to a culpable
 ‘ excess ; for an ardently grateful piety is conge-
 ‘ nial to the undepraved nature of man, whose
 ‘ mind, sinking under the magnitude of the sub-
 ‘ ject, and struggling to express its motions, has
 ‘ recourse to metaphors and allegories, which it
 ‘ sometimes extends beyond the bounds of cool
 ‘ reason, and often to the brink of absurdity.’

The author here gives some considerable ex-
 tracts from *Barrow* on the love of God, and the

mysterious union and communion of the soul with him, which he thinks, ‘ border on quietism and ‘ enthusiastic devotion’ ; and then adds, that these ‘ differ only from the mystical theology of the Sufis ‘ and Yogis, as the flowers and fruits of Europe ‘ differ in scent and flavour from those of Asia ; ‘ or as European differs from Asiatic eloquence ; ‘ the same strain, in poetical measure, would rise up ‘ to the odes of Spencer on divine love and beauty ; ‘ and in a higher key, with richer embellishments ‘ to the songs of Hafiz and Jayadéva, the raptures ‘ of the Masnavi, and the Mysteries of the Bhága- ‘ vat.’

Sir W. Jones gives another considerable extract on the same subject, taken from M. Necker, in which he represents God as thus addressing man : ‘ Your nature is composed of those divine ‘ particles, which, at an infinite distance, constitute my own essence.’ This, Sir W. says, is ‘ the exact system of the Sufis and Vedantis in epitome. They believe that the Deity pervades the universe ; that he alone is perfect benevolence, truth and beauty : that all ‘ the beauties of nature ‘ are faint resemblances only, like images in a ‘ mirror, of the divine charms ;’—‘ that we must ‘ beware of attachment to such *phantoms*, and ‘ attach ourselves exclusively to God, who truly ‘ exists in us, as we exist solely in him ; that we ‘ retain, even in this forlorn state of separation ‘ from our Beloved, the idea of heavenly beauty, ‘ and the remembrance of our primeval vows ; ‘ that sweet music, gentle breezes, fragrant flow-

'ers, perpetually renew the primary idea, refresh
 'our fading memory, and melt us with tender
 'affections; that we must cherish those affections,
 'and by abstracting our souls from vanity, that
 'is, from all but God, approximate to his es-
 'sence, in our final union with which will consist
 'our supreme beatitude. From these principles
 'flow a thousand metaphors and poetical figures,
 'which abound in the sacred poems of the Per-
 'sians and Hindus, who seem to mean the same
 'thing in substance, and differ only in expression
 'as their languages differ in idiom. The modern
 'Sufis, who profess a belief in the Koran, sup-
 'pose, with great sublimity both of thought and
 'of diction, an express contract, on the day of
 'eternity without beginning, between the assem-
 'blage of created spirits and the Supreme Soul,
 'from which they were detached, when a celestial
 'voice pronounced these words, addressed to each
 'spirit separately, 'Art thou not with thy Lord?'
 'that is, Art thou not bound by a solemn contract
 'with him? and all the spirits answered with one
 'voice, 'Yes:' hence it is, that *alist*, or *art thou*
 '*not*, and *beli*, or *yes*, incessantly occur in the
 'mystical verses of the Persians, and of the Turk-
 'ish poets, who imitate them, as the Romans
 'imitated the Greeks. The Hindus describe the
 'same covenant under the figurative notion, so
 'finely expressed by Isaiah, of a nuptial contract;
 'for, considering God in the three characters of
 'creator, regenerator and preserver, and suppos-
 'ing the power of preservation and benevolence
 'to have become incarnate in the person of

‘ *Grishna*, they represent him as married to *Rad-*
 ‘ *ha*, a word signifying *atonement*, pacification,
 ‘ or satisfaction ; but applied allegorically to the
 ‘ soul of man, or rather to the whole assemblage
 ‘ of created souls ; between whom and the bene-
 ‘ volent Creator they suppose that reciprocal love,
 ‘ which Barrow describes with a glow of expres-
 ‘ sion perfectly oriental ; and which our most or-
 ‘ thodox theologians believe to have been mysti-
 ‘ cally shadowed in the *Song of Solomon*, while
 ‘ they admit that, in a literal sense, it is an *epi-*
 ‘ *thalamium* on the marriage of the sapient king
 ‘ with the princess of Egypt. The very learned
 ‘ author of the *Prelectiones* on sacred poetry de-
 ‘ clared his opinion, that the canticles were found-
 ‘ ed on historical truth, but involved an allegory
 ‘ of that sort, which he named mystical ; and the
 ‘ beautiful poem on the loves of *Laili* and
 ‘ *Majnum*, by the inimitable Nizami (to say no-
 ‘ thing of other poems on the same subject) is in-
 ‘ disputably built on true history, yet avowedly
 ‘ allegorical and mysterious, for the introduction
 ‘ to it is a continued rapture on divine love ; and
 ‘ the name of *Laili* seems to be used in the *Mas-*
 ‘ *navi* and the odes of *Hafiz*, for the omnipresent
 ‘ spirit of God.’

As to *Hafiz*, our truly learned author observes,
 ‘ it has been made a question whether the poems
 ‘ of *Hafiz* must be taken in a literal or in a figura-
 ‘ tive sense ; but the question does not admit of a
 ‘ general and direct answer ; for even the most
 ‘ enthusiastic of his commentators allow, that some

‘ of them are to be taken literally ; and his editors
 ‘ ought to have distinguished them, as our Spen-
 ‘ cer has distinguished his four odes on Love and
 ‘ Beauty ; instead of mixing the profane with the
 ‘ divine by a childish arrangement according to
 ‘ the alphabetical order of the rhymes.—‘ Many
 ‘ zealous admirers of Hafiz,’ Sir William adds,
 ‘ insist, that by *wine* he invariably means devo-
 ‘ tion—by *kisses* and *embraces* the raptures of
 ‘ piety,’ &c. &c. ‘ The poet himself,’ he sub-
 joins, ‘ gives a colour in many passages to such
 ‘ an interpretation ; and without it we can hardly
 ‘ conceive, that his poems, or those of his nume-
 ‘ rous imitators would be tolerated in a Mussel-
 ‘ man country, especially at Constantinople, where
 ‘ they are venerated as divine compositions : it
 ‘ must be admitted, that the sublimity of the mys-
 ‘ tical allegory, which like metaphors and com-
 ‘ parisons should be general only, not minutely
 ‘ exact, is diminished, if not destroyed, by an
 ‘ attempt at particular and distinct resemblances ;
 ‘ and that the style is open to dangerous misinter-
 ‘ pretation, while it supplies real infidels with a
 ‘ pretext for laughing at religion itself.’

The learned president here introduces an ode
 of the above nature by an ancient Sufi, surnamed
 Ismat, in which the mysteries of their religion
 are disguised under the licentious allegories of
 love and wine ; and, after some farther extracts,
 concludes this elegant and ingenious essay in the
 following manner.

‘ Let us return to the Hindus, among whom we now find the same emblematical theology, which Pythagoras admired and adopted. The loves of *Cbrishna* and *Radha*, or the reciprocal attraction between the divine goodness and the human soul, are told at large in the tenth book of the *Bhágavat*, and are the subject of a little pastoral drama, entitled *Gitagóvinda*: it was the work of Jayadéva, who flourished, it is said, before Calidas, and was born, as he tells us himself, in Cenduli, which many believe to be in Calinga; but, since there is a town of a similar name in Berdwan, the natives of it insist that the finest lyric poet of India was their countryman, and celebrate, in honour of him, an annual jubilee, passing a whole night in representing his drama, and in singing his beautiful songs.’

The sum of our evidence in favour of the allegorical import of the Song of Songs amounts to this: That there is a rational ground for the allegory in divine truth; that the same imagery is allegorically employed in other undoubted parts of scripture; that this is perfectly in the eastern taste; that it has been almost the universal sense of ancients and moderns, who have studied this book; and that otherwise, it were very difficult, not to say impossible, to account for its admission into the sacred canon.

It has been said that some of these arguments prove only the possibility of the case and not the fact; that it *may* be allegorical and not that it *is*

so. I think they go farther ; but if the possibility of this fact be admitted from some of these considerations, others will induce a very high degree of probability, sufficient for conviction in the present case. For instance, if from the eastern taste of composition, and more particularly from the style of the sacred writers, it appears that the same or similar images are employed in the description of divine mysteries, it surely follows, from the admission of this book into the sacred canon, that very probably this is of the same import : at least that those who placed it there, and had far better opportunities than we of judging, thought so : this is much strengthened by the general current of early Jewish and Christian writers, and comes nothing short, as I conceive of sufficient evidence, to satisfy any reasonable enquirer. But to fasten the conviction and complete the evidence I have reserved to this place the following argument, which being of a *moral* nature, stands distinguished from the rest¹.

The argument is this : that the book in its allegorical sense has been instrumental to the comfort and edification of thousands of pious Jews

¹ I am sensible of having omitted one argument on which some advocates for this book have laid considerable stress ; I mean the difficulty of accommodating many parts of this poem to a literal sense : but I have omitted it intentionally, because, 1st, I have endeavoured to accommodate the whole in this manner ; and 2d, because there is a like difficulty in spiritualizing the whole ; still, however, I am disposed to think with Mr. Henley, that had the poem been intended merely as a marriage song, some passages would not have been admitted.

and Christians of all ages. Now if we admit a providence superintending all human affairs, and especially the concerns of the church, how shall we reconcile it to the character of God, to suppose he has suffered his church to be deluded with a mere love-song, and in the opinion of the objectors, a very loose and profane one, for three or four thousand years ? The supposition amounts to such a high degree of improbability as we seldom admit ; little inferior to that of supposing, that the English church might have been so imposed on, as to mistake the poems of Rochester for a book of divine hymns and spiritual songs.



SECTION VI.

OF THE INSPIRATION OF SOLOMON'S SONG.

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THIS may rather be considered as an inference from the preceding evidence, than as another subject of enquiry. For if this book were written by Solomon, a writer confessedly inspired, and contain the divine mysteries of revelation, no good reason can surely be assigned, why it should not be admitted of equal authority with the other sacred books, and particularly with other books composed by him.

Nothing therefore remains but to consider a few objections, which have not been above discussed ; and they shall be taken chiefly from Mr.

WHISTON, who lays great stress upon them, and knew how to do them justice. I shall reduce them to two or three.

I. ‘ That there is no foundation for an allegorical or mystical sense of this book ; there being ‘ not the least sign of a sober, virtuous, or divine ‘ meaning therein ; nor any thing that in the least ‘ concerns morality or virtue, God¹ or religion, ‘ the Messiah or his kingdom :’ nay farther, ‘ that the use and introduction of double senses ‘ of scripture among the Jews, is much *later* than ‘ the days of *Solomon*, and cannot therefore be ‘ supposed to belong to any book of his writing².’

What foundation there is for an allegorical sense in this book I have endeavoured to shew above : and if this be admitted, then is the book *full* of morality and virtue, God and religion, ‘ the Messiah and his kingdom,’ as will appear in the subjoined commentary.

The objection to the antiquity of allegory is evidently unfounded. Solomon employs it both in his Proverbs and Ecclesiastes³ ; Nathan’s parable to David⁴ was earlier, and that of Jo-

¹ Some writers have added, that the *name* of God does not occur in this book, as an additional objection to its inspiration. But this is, 1st. childish and nugatory ; neither does it occur in the book of Esther, which is much longer : 2d. It is false ; the name JAH (a contraction of Jehovah) occurring in chap. viii. 6. Not to say that the Messiah is designated throughout as a bridegroom, as by the prophets.

² Supplement to his Essay toward restoring the Text of the Old Testament, p. 12, 13, 22.

³ Prov. viii. Eccles. xii.

⁴ 2 Sam. xii. 1.

than¹ still more ancient; not to appeal to the writings of Moses, nor to the 45th psalm above considered.

As a kind of supplement to this objection, another writer observes, that 'in all other allegories 'there is something to fix the design, and to assist us in finding out their meaning;' as well as 'to oblige us to allegorize' in explaining them: whereas this affords no key to the allegory, and admits a literal exposition².

But neither of these assertions is correct and true. Nathan's parable had so little in it that appeared allegorical, that David took it for a true narrative: and Solomon's allegory in Ecclesiastes has been much disputed. The keys to most allegories are to be found in their history, when no explanation is subjoined. The key of this song is to be found in the 45th psalm and other parts of scripture, where the like imagery is employed in the same way. The necessity of allegorizing this book, if not apparent in the book itself, is sufficiently evident from the arguments in favour of its allegorical design: and the difficulty of otherwise accounting for its admission and continuance in the Canon. Nor can this be accounted for, as this writer pretends, from the Jews' partiality to Solomon and his writings; otherwise, why did they not insert the Book of Wisdom, and other ancient pieces which bear his name? Nor is it likely that the Christians should adopt it out of complaisance to the Jews, since

¹ Judges ix. ² Dissertation on Solomon's Song, 1751.

the first Christians were above this suspicion, and the later ones would rather have rejected than received it on that account. But to return to Mr. Whiston; he objects,

2dly. That neither the contemporary nor succeeding writers of the Old Testament, ever quote or allude to it¹:—neither the apocryphal writers—neither Philo nor Josephus—neither Christ nor his apostles—nor any writers of the first century, though many of these were much given to allegories and allegorical interpretation.—In this objection I have condensed several of my authors, and therefore must answer them distinctly.

I am not *certain* that any of the other sacred writers *expressly cite*, or transcribe from this canticle: but the same may be said, not only of many of the psalms, and perhaps of Job, but of Esther, Nehemiah, and some other books; and is therefore of no force. Yet it is most certain, as already shewn, that other sacred writers, both of the Old Testament and the New, employ the same figures, borrow many of the expressions, and allude, it is probable, to many passages, as may be seen by references in the margin², and more fully in the commentary. And if this po-

¹ So Dr. Durell, (Remarks on Canticles) 'It is not quoted, or most distantly alluded to, in the sacred writings.'

² Besides the passages above cited compare the following:

Cant. i. 4. with John vi. 44.

ii. 3. — Rev. xxii. 1, 2.

15. — Ezek. xiii. 4.

iii. 1. — Isa. xxvi. 9.

iv. 7. — Ephes. v. 27.

11. — Hos. xiv. 7.

sition be disputable, it can only be from the similarity of style in the sacred books, which makes it doubtful what passages are referred to, and forms therefore an argument in favour of our hypothesis.

The like may be said of the apocryphal writers, and others named in the objection, as might be shewn, if it were worth while to be minute. The evidence of Josephus has been considered; and Philo has few quotations from the scriptures. As to the fathers, if some of them have omitted quoting this book, we have its authority expressly allowed by Melito, and Origen was one of its most celebrated early commentators: and though we consider the apostolical constitutions, so highly praised by Mr. Whiston, as an imposture, it may be worth observing, that this author twice speaks of the *little foxes which destroy the vineyards*, in allusion to this book; and these passages seem to have given him no little trouble¹.

Cant. iv. 15. with John iv. 14.

v. 1. ———, iii. 29.

2. ——— Rev. iii. 20.

Matt. xxv. 5.

13. ——— xiii. 52.

viii. 6. ——— Hag. ii. 23.

vii. 11. ——— Matt. xxi. 33.

14. ——— Rev. xxii. 17, 20.

² See Gill's Expos. edit. 3d. p. 11.

SECTION VII.

FORMER COMMENTATORS, WITH THE PLAN
OF THE FOLLOWING WORK.

MY last object is to give a kind of historic sketch of the expositions of this book, and a hasty view of the principal writers on it ; noticing particularly such as I have consulted ; and pointing out to the reader the method adopted in this work. It must not be expected, however, that in any class I should enumerate them all, for their name is *legion*.

The Jewish commentators shall take the lead ; and first, the TARGUM, or Chaldee paraphrase on this book, which is very full and copious, and supposed to have been written by *Joseph the blind*, or one-eyed. That this is not of the high antiquity which some of the Jews pretend, is evident from its containing the notion of two Messiahs, which is modern ; as well as from its mention of the Talmud, which was not completed till about A. D. 500. A translation of this was added by Dr. Gill to the first edition of his Exposition.

The *Jewish commentators* mentioned, and consulted by Dr. Gill¹ (a master in this walk of learning,) are, beside the Targum, *Shirbasbirim*, *Rabba*, *Sol. Ben Jarchi*, *Aben Ezra*, *Alsbeck*, and *Talkut Simeoni*, with the books of *Zohar*

¹ Pref. to Expos.

and the *Rabboth*: to which he might have added *David Kimchi*, and a few others, which he consulted, perhaps only occasionally. The books of *Zohar* and *Rabboth* are not comments on this book, yet they afford many occasional illustrations in the Jewish manner. These writers, who are all disposed to allegorize, are by no means more unanimous than the Christian commentators; with whom also they agree in generally turning the figures as much as possible in honour of their church and priesthood: *ex. gra.* They tell you the *eyes* of the church intend its *doctors*, as if the laity were always blind. Blessed be God, he permits and encourages us to *see* with our own eyes.

The Canticles were pretty early a favourite book with the fathers, and (as then understood) suited the genius of *Origen* to a tittle. He wrote copiously on this book, and in the *comment* translated by Jerome, he is said, by that father, as much to have excelled himself, as in his other works he did all contemporary writers; which was certainly intended as a compliment.

Gregory, of Nyssa, wrote fifteen homilies, containing an allegorical exposition as far as the middle of the sixth chapter. He was followed by *Eusebius*, *Cyprian*, and others, who were fond of this book, apparently, because it gave them a favourable opportunity to display their wit and ingenuity in allegorizing.

St. Bernard wrote eighty-six sermons on the two first chapters, of which the best I can say is,

that they are commended by Erasmus, doubtless for their piety and *unction*.

CALMET¹ has given a long list of authors of the middle ages, who have attempted to explain this book ; of whom little is known but that they exist in some ecclesiastical libraries ; even the names of the following only seem worth enumerating.

Venerable *Bede* wrote seven books on this subject, or rather six, for the seventh is copied entirely from Gregory the Great. This work was intended as a defence of the doctrines of Grace against the Pelagians !

The commentary of *Foliot*, bishop of London in the 12th century, with the compendium of *Alcuin*, was printed in 1638, and is repeatedly referred to by Dr. Gill. Of *Thomas Aquinas'* comment, the only thing I know remarkable is, that it is said to have been dictated on his death-bed.

Scotus is favourably spoken of by Poole as not one of the last to be named of this period².

Genebrand, a learned benedictine, wrote two comments, a larger and smaller, both in the latter part of the sixteenth century : and his work is distinguished by collections from the Rabbins. He was a zealous advocate for the church of Rome, and died Bishop of Aix, A. D. 1597.

¹ Biblioth. sac. art. 5. in 3d. volume of his great dictionary.

² Syn. Crit. vol. II. Pref.

Gasper Sanctius (or Sanchez) a very laborious Spanish jesuit, who wrote critical notes on most of the old Testament, and particularly on the Canticles, died in 1628, aged 75.

Bossuet, Bp. of Meaux, was the first writer, I believe, who divided this book into seven parts, answerable to the seven days of the Jewish weddings : he has also some critical remarks on the beauty of Solomon's imagery, literally considered. This eloquent prelate lived to the beginning of the 18th century.

Mercerus, or Mercier, is a very learned commentator on this song, and the book of Proverbs, whose notes are chiefly critical. He was professor of Hebrew at Paris ; and died in 1562.

Cocceius, professor of theology at Leyden, was a learned and evangelical man ; but strongly addicted to allegorical exposition. This writer hath been placed in contrast with Grotius ; and it has been said, that the former found Christ *every* where in the Scripture, and the latter *no* where. He died in the close of the 17th century.

Hufnagel and *Datthe* are foreign writers, which I have not seen, but have been favoured with some beautiful extracts by a friend.

Bocbart, though not a commentator on this book, hath learnedly explained such passages as refer to its natural history and geography. Of English commentators the following are the most considerable :

Thomas James, D. D. published a curious exposition of this book at Oxford, in 1607, which was entirely extracted from the fathers, with whom

he was well acquainted, and had good opportunities of consulting, being, if I mistake not, public librarian at Oxford.

Henry Ainsworth's learned, though concise comment on this book, was first printed in England, in 1626; and at Franckfort, in the German language, 1693. This is a most valuable expositor, and one of the first of our countrymen that paid a proper attention to the literal meaning of the Old Testament, which he illustrated by quotations from the Rabbins.

James Durham printed his exposition first at Edinburgh, in 1668, at London in 1695, and at Utrecht in 1681. His remarks are sweet and savory, and he was the model of most succeeding expositors, who have treated this book rather with a regard to the spiritual improvement of the reader, than with a critical view to the genuine meaning of the writer.

In 1609 the pious bishop *Hall* published 'an open and plain paraphrase' upon this book, in which I confess the allegory is treated with more modesty and judgment than by some later divines.

Bishop *Patrick* produced his paraphrase and annotations on this song in 1700. Beside investigating the literal sense, with considerable pains, he has, in the paraphrase, allegorized the whole, in which the Rabbins and the fathers are his avowed guides.

A host of English writers have indeed written commentaries and sermons on this book, the most considerable of whom, beside the above, are *John Dove*, *John Trapp*, *Arthur Jackson*, and *Dr. Collinges*, whose writings, especially the last's,

are evangelical and practical; but throw little light, in my humble conception, on the true meaning of the book.

Though the learned Dr. *John Owen* is not a professed commentator on this song, in his 'Communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' he has given one of the best spiritual explications of the most interesting passages.

We come now to the present century. At the head of this must be placed the learned and laborious Dr. *Gill*, 'whose praise is in all the churches.' His Exposition was first printed in 1728, and here the Dr. hath collected every thing valuable he could find, critical or spiritual, either in Jewish or Christian writers. This was improved and enlarged in successive editions, of which the fourth has been lately printed.

But with all due deference to so great a name, this work appears to me to have capital defects:—
 1. It confounds and intermixes the literal and allegorical senses, so as to give neither distinct nor complete. 2. It collects (like the fisher's net) such a quantity of observations, good and bad, as appears to me rather to confuse than to instruct. 3. By applying the several figures to so great a variety of objects, it leaves us still to seek the right. But my chief objection is, 4. To the minute dissection of the allegory, which appears to me to destroy both its consistency and beauty, and expose it far too much to the ridicule of profane minds¹.

¹ I have omitted mentioning, 'The Fair Circassian,' a poem imitated from the Song of Solomon, printed in 1720 and written by Dr. *Coxall* in early life, which is indeed

In 1751 was published, 'A Dissertation on the 'Song of Solomon, with the original text, divided 'according to the metre (upon Bishop Hare's hypothesis) and a poetical version,' (8vo. Millar.) Dr. Kippis¹ says that it was written by a Mr. *Gifford*, who considers the poem as 'a pastoral, 'composed by Solomon, as the amusement 'of 'his lighter hours, just after his nuptials with Pharaoh's daughter.' In this view he looks upon it as a very elegant and beautiful performance. He thinks it was in the gaiety of youth, and before God had so remarkably appeared to him, and given him that divine wisdom, for which he was afterward so eminent²! This date he builds chiefly on the order in which Solomon's works are mentioned by the Son of Sirach, which, with the author's other arguments, has been considered in its place. The version is elegant, but being in rhyme is of no assistance as a translation.

The late learned Bishop of London, Dr. *Lowth* in his *Prælectiones*, since translated by Dr. Gregory, devoted two lectures³ expressly to this poem, and maintains it, as we have already seen, to be an allegorical composition. Michaelis, the learned Gottingen professor, whose notes are subjoined, rejects this interpretation, and understands it only as a poem in the praise of matrimonial

the only apology which can be made for it; since, though the version is extremely elegant, it always perverts the language of Solomon to the most profane and licentious meaning.

¹ Doddridge's Lectures, vol. II. p. 117, note. 3d. edit.

² Mon. Rev. 1751, p. 492.

³ Lect. xxx. xxxi.

love ; yet he admits it to be perfectly chaste, as well as elegant. Rev. Mr. Henley, of Hendlesham, has answered these in other notes, in which he endeavours to support the allegory.

In 1764 was published ‘ A New Translation, ‘ with a Commentary and Annotations,’ [thin 8vo. Dodsley,] in which the author confines himself to the literal sense, and endeavours to correct some passages of the original, which he supposes may have been corrupted in transcribing. This work was anonymous, but is universally ascribed to Dr. *Percy*, the editor of ‘ Reliques of antient English ‘ Poetry,’ and since Bishop of Dromore in Ireland.

The year 1768 produced Mr. *Harmer*’s valuable volume, entitled, ‘ Outlines of a Commentary ‘ on Solomon’s Song, drawn by the help of instructions from the East.’ This work contains, 1. Remarks on its general nature : 2. Observations on detached places : and, 3. Queries concerning the rest of this poem. The reader will see by the frequent references to this and the preceding works, how much I have been indebted to them.

In 1772 Dr. *Durell* published Critical Remarks on Job, Proverbs, Psalms, Ecclesiastes and Canticles. In the latter the Dr. considers the Song of Songs as an epithalamium on Solomon’s marriage with Pharaoh’s daughter ; the composition he supposes of a middle nature, between the dramatic and pastoral, but totally excludes any allegorical or spiritual design.

I have next to mention a Scotch anonymous publication, written in 1769, and printed at Edinburgh in 1775, entitled, ‘ The Song of Solomon ‘ paraphrased, with an introduction, commentary, ‘ and notes.’ This work is dedicated to Bishop Lowth; but I have not been able to learn any thing of its author, who appears to have been a man of learning and judgment, and is peculiarly happy in his divisions of this poem, which appear to me preferable to those of Bossuet.

The next version (printed 1781) was the production of a lady, assisted by the late learned and ingenious Mr. Parkhurst, viz. ‘ A poetical Translation of Solomon’s Song, from the original Hebrew, by *Ann Francis*,’ accompanied with notes, from Percy, Harmer, Parkhurst, &c. This being in rhyme, like that of Mr. Gifford and some others, can be of little use to a literal translator, and the division of it into acts and scenes gives it too much the appearance of a modern drama.

In the same year the Rev. *W. Green*, M. A. rector of Hardingham in Norfolk, published a new translation of the poetical parts of the Old Testament, and among the rest, of Solomon’s Song. The lines were measured and divided according to the hypothesis of Bishop Hare, and contained many passages as awkward and unpoetical as the following :

Ch. I. 5.

I am black as the tents
Of Kedar, O ye daughters
Of Jerusalem, yet beautiful
As the tent curtains of Solomon,

Ch. II. 7.

I conjure you, O ye daughters
Of Jerusalem, by the roots,
And by the hinds of the field,
That ye disturb not, nor awake
My love until he please.

There are some good lines, and some learned observations; but in point of arrangement and harmony of style, the reader will see little assistance is to be derived from this writer. The introduction, commentary and notes, are, by the author's acknowledgment, chiefly taken from those of Dr. Percy above referred to.

In 1785 was printed, at the Clarendon Press, 'SOLOMON'S SONG, translated from the Hebrew, by *Bernard Hodgson*, LL. D. Principal of Hertford college. This version is in measured lines, and might have saved me considerable trouble in that respect, had I seen it before mine was written. I have, however, availed myself of several of the author's criticisms, and in some places corrected my version by them: in others I have widely differed from him, and given my reasons, Dr. Hodgson does not meddle with the allegorical sense, but confines his attempt to an elegant and correct version.

The latest production I have seen on this subject is the following, 'The Preacher and Song of Solomon, newly translated, with short explanatory notes, by Dr. *J. C. Döderlein*.' This work was printed in Dutch, at Jena; but an English literal version is given of it in the appendix to the 15th vol. of the Critical Review, 1795.

The late excellent Mr. *Romaine* published a volume of practical discourses on some detached verses of this book, in which he endeavours to avoid the whimsical application of every minute

part of the allegory, as practised by the old divines; and recommends a mode of exposition similar to that which I have adopted, and which it is time I should hasten to explain.

The reader is now in possession of my authorities, and the authors I have been able to consult, among the great number which have written on this book. Should he enquire what method I have taken to profit by their labours, the following particulars will inform him :

1. Having attempted from the original¹ a translation as literal as I conceive our language will bear, I compared it, especially in the difficult passages, with all the others I could procure, not omitting the curious collection of versions in good Bishop Wilson's Bible. But as my object was, *not* to make a *new* version, but a just one, I have conformed it to our authorized version, wherever I could with propriety, and consistent with an attempt to preserve the poetic form of the original. For I conceive that, when two words or phrases will equally agree with the sense of the author, our ear is prejudiced naturally in favour of that to which we have been accustomed : and moreover

¹ As to the various readings of the Hebrew and early versions, I have noticed most of those which affect the sense, especially in obscure passages; though I cannot say that they remove many difficulties. But in this article I have to acknowledge peculiar obligations to a learned clergyman, who undertook the task of collecting them from the massy volumes of Walton, Kennicott, and De Rossi.

that there is a certain solemnity in the style of our translators that, in general, excellently comports with the character of an inspired work. This done, my translation was submitted to half a dozen, or more, literary friends; all of whom have more or less improved it by their corrections and remarks.

Having compared these, and corrected my translation, the next object was to subjoin a body of notes to justify its propriety; and in this, I have never affected to be original but when necessary: considering any authority superior to my own. In the few notes which are original the reader will find the motives which have determined me.

My next and most arduous undertaking was to give a practical and evangelical exposition of the allegory; such as might interest the most pious reader, without disgusting the most judicious, and without running into the excesses which I have censured in other writers.

The general hypothesis I have adopted is that of Bishop Lowth, Mr. Henley, Mr. Harmer, and other of the most judicious modern expositors on the allegorical plan: but, as in some particulars I have differed from each of them, I think it unfair to avail myself of their name and authority, without stating those differences.

Bishop Lowth observes, in a passage already cited, that the sacred writers consider JEHOVAH as the husband of the church, the church as married to him, and matrimony as a sacred symbol of their covenant relation. This I conceive just and true;

but I think farther, that in such passages regard is in general had personally to our Lord Jesus Christ; and that, on account of his assumption of humanity and near relation to us, it is more reverential, decent, and consistent, to refer such passages to him, as is done by the writers of the New Testament, and even by our Lord himself, who tells us plainly that he is the Bridegroom, and his church the Bride.

Nor is this inconsistent with the opinions of the antient Jews, who found their Messiah almost every where in the Scriptures, as well as Paul and other Christian writers. Indeed they always believed their œconomy to be peculiarly under the protection of Messiah, in some one or other of his characters, as the great Angel of the Covenant, the King of Israel, or the Son of God. In particular, they applied to him the 45th Psalm (which of all scripture most resembles the Song of Solomon) for the Chaldee paraphrase on the 2d verse says, ‘ Thy fairness, O King Messiah ! exceedeth the sons of men.’

In the same manner they applied the 72d, 110th, and various other psalms, as well as many passages of the prophets.

So far I believe his Lordship would not object, but in some of the following remarks we are not perfectly agreed. ‘ Concerning the explanation of this allegory, I will only add that, in the first place we ought to be cautious of carrying the figurative application too far, and of entering into

‘a precise explication of every particular. Again
 ‘I would advise that this production be treat-
 ‘ed according to the established rules of alle-
 ‘gory in the sacred writings, and that the author
 ‘be permitted to be his own interpreter.’ So
 far have I been guided by his lordship’s excellent
 admonitions. He adds, ‘In this respect the er-
 ‘rors of critics and divines have been as numerous
 ‘as they have been pernicious. Not to mention
 ‘other absurdities, they have taken the allegory,
 ‘not as denoting the *universal state of the church*,
 ‘but *the spiritual state of individuals*; than
 ‘which *nothing can be more inconsistent* with the
 ‘very nature and ground-work of the allegory it-
 ‘self, as well as with the general practice of the
 ‘Hebrew poets on these occasions’¹.

But here, as I have ventured so far to differ from
 this excellent prelate as to apply many parts of the
 allegory to the spiritual circumstances of individu-
 al believers, I think myself obliged to offer some
 apology. And,

1. I consider the church as composed of indi-
 vidual believers, and that there is an analogy be-
 tween the dealings of God with his church in ge-
 neral, and with individuals, which analogy is, I
 think, plainly pointed out, in many parts of the
 New Testament. Sometimes the sacred writers
 compare the whole body of believers to a temple,
 in which they form living stones, being builded
 on the only foundation, Christ Jesus: at other

¹ Lect. xxxi.

times they consider individual saints as temples of the Holy Ghost¹. So sometimes they speak of the church as one—the Bride the Lamb's wife ; and at other times of distinct churches, or individual believers, as severally married to the Lord².

It is in this manner, I think, that St. Paul allegorizes the History of Hagar and her mistress, referring to the two dispensations, while at the same time he makes a practical application of it to the consciences of the Galatians : ‘ Now we brethren, ‘ as Isaac was, are children of the promise³.’

2. As to the prophets, or ‘ Hebrew poets,’ as his lordship calls them, they were certainly experimental preachers. David was a prophet, and the Book of Psalms may be considered as his diary, relating the frames of his mind under varying circumstances, both spiritual and temporal. Many of these passages our Lord applies to himself ; but not, I conceive, so exclusively as to prevent the appropriation of them by believers in general, except in such passages as refer peculiarly to his divine character and work. This remark might in a degree be extended to the other prophets, though it must be confessed that the more sublime of them were chiefly engaged with predictions relative to the church and to the world at large.

3. I consider the allegory to be designed for purposes of piety and devotion, which cannot be so well answered without such an application. This may appear a weak argument at first view,

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. ² Ephes. ii. 20—22.

³ Rev. xxi. 9. 2 Cor. xi. 2.

³ Gal. iv. 22—31.

but will be strengthened when we consider the doctrine of the New Testament, that ‘ whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning ;’ and that their grand design is to ‘ make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.’ This shews both the propriety and importance of a particular application of scriptural truths to the circumstances and experience of individuals. Religion is a personal thing, and that professor is a hypocrite, the feelings of whose heart are not influenced by it, as well as the actions of his life.

Mr. HARMER, who admits an allegorical sense to this poem, considers the introduction of two wives of Solomon, as best adapted to figure the different states of the Jewish and Christian church; and particularly the former, as provoked to jealousy by the conversion of the latter; and I freely confess that the idea at first struck me as beautiful, and was chiefly rejected for want of evidence. However, at the suggestion of a friend I have reconsidered, and now deliberately reject it, for the following reasons, which I submit to the candour of my friend, and of the public.

1. I conceive that Polygamy, though it might be winked at, or tolerated, in some particular instances under the Old Testament, was yet never sanctioned by the divine law, much less in the excess practised by Solomon. It therefore does not appear to me probable that this circumstance should be made the ground of so sublime a mystery as the calling of the Gentiles,

2. It appears to me that the case supposed by Mr. H. does not give a just representation of this mystery: the case would have been more parallel had the former wife been divorced for infidelity to the marriage covenant; for this is evidently the condition of the Jews; though we are not without hope that, in a future day they may be recovered and forgiven¹.

3. The Jewish church is represented as of foreign origin, by the prophets, and this circumstance is strongly pressed on her recollection. 'Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.'— 'Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite².'

It must be owned, indeed, that the Jewish church is not called an *Egyptian*; yet the circumstance of coming up from Egypt is very appropriate, and that of which she often was reminded. 'Remember the Lord thy God which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'

If the forty-fifth psalm be admitted to refer to the Jewish church, as I think it generally has been (though not by Mr. Harmer) we have additional evidence on this point; for there she is expressly exhorted to 'forget her own people and her father's house,' which certainly implies her foreign extract, and properly comports with our explanation of the allegory in this song.

¹ See Rom. xi. throughout.

² Isa. li. 1. Ezek. xvi. 3, 45, 46.

4. I cannot here refer to all the passages produced by Mr. H. to countenance the idea of two wives of Solomon—they shall be considered, as far as my recollection serves, in the commentary : but I confess I see them with different eyes from Mr. H. For instance, when the spouse says, ‘ I am a rose of Sharon,’ &c. it appears to me the language of modesty and self-diffidence : but I perceive nothing in it of jealousy, or reflection upon a foreign rival, as suggested by this ingenious writer. Had the jealousy been on the other side ; i. e. had the Egyptian princess been provoked to jealousy by a Jewish rival, it might have received a much stronger countenance from her language in the first chapter : ‘ I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem !’

5. The Gentile church appears to me more properly introduced in the last chapter, as a younger sister, not yet marriageable, as I shall endeavour to shew in the sequel ; and this I believe is the unanimous opinion of Christian expositors, both ancient and modern, to the time of Mr. H.

The last thing I shall notice is a suggestion of Mr. HENLEY, that this poem was probably composed on occasion of the dedication of the temple, and with a reference to that event. This conjecture appears to me very ingenious, and I confess that I do not, at present, see any material objection to it, as Solomon’s marriage with Pharaoh’s daughter preceded this event but a few years ; and as this was the best period of his life for wisdom,

piety, and happiness : at the same time I confess also that it appears to me to be a mere conjecture, unsupported by argument or authority.

I shall not detain the reader any longer in these preliminary essays, which are already disproportioned to the size of the work ; but I shall immediately present him with the proposed translation, unaccompanied with remarks, except to distinguish the speakers, and mark the divisions : then I shall repeat the whole in convenient portions, accompanied with a commentary, and subjoin critical notes in the margin. The judicious reader, aware of the difficulty of the undertaking, will make candid allowances in an attempt wherein so many great men have failed : and the pious reader will avail himself of the hints offered rather to suggest subjects of meditation than to exhaust them.

THE
SONG OF SONGS,
BY
SOLOMON.

SONG OF SONGS

SOLOMON

THE
SONG OF SONGS,
WHICH IS BY
SOLOMON.

SECTION I. [*1st Morning.*]

CHAP. I.

SPOUSE.

2. **L**ET him kiss me with the kisses of his
mouth !
For better is thy love than wine ;
3 Because of the odour of thy good ointments,
(Thy name is as ointment poured out).
Therefore do the virgins love thee.
4 O draw me !

VIRGINS.

After thee will we run.

SPOUSE.

The king hath brought me into his chambers.

VIRGINS.

We will be glad and rejoice in thee :
We will celebrate thy love more than wine :
The upright love thee.

SPOUSE.

- 5 Dark am I, but comely, ye daughters of Je-
rusalem,
As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solo-
mon.
6 Gaze not upon me because I am black—
Because the sun hath beamed on me.

R

CH. I.

My mother's sons were angry with me ;
 They made me keeper of the vineyards :
 Mine own vineyard have I not kept.

[*Apostrophe to the Bridegroom.*]

7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where
 thou feedest ?

Where thou causest [thy flock] to rest at
 noon ?

For why should I be as a stranger
 Among the flocks of thy companions ?

VIRGINS.

8 If thou thyself knowest not, O most beautiful
 of women,

Go thy way forth by the footsteps of this flock,
 And feed thy kids among the tents of these
 shepherds.

SECTION II. [1st Evening.]

BRIDEGROOM.

9 To the horse in Pharaoh's chariots
 Have I compared thee, my consort :

10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows,
 Thy neck with [ornamental] chains.

VIRGINS.

11 Rows of gold will we make for thee,
 With studs of silver.

SPOUSE.

12 While the king is in his circle [of friends]
 My spikenard shall yield its odour.

13 A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me,
 [Which] shall remain continually in my bo-
 som.

CH. I.

- 14 A cluster of cypress is my beloved unto me,
[Such as is] in the vineyards of En-gedi.
-

SECTION III. [2d Morning.]

BRIDEGROOM.

- 15 Behold thou art beautiful, my consort :
Behold thou art beautiful! thine eyes are doves.
SPOUSE.
16 Behold thou art beautiful, my beloved ; yea
pleasant,
Yea verdant is our carpet.

BRIDEGROOM.

- 17 Cedars are the roof of our house,
And the Brutine trees our rafters.

CH. II.

SPOUSE.

I am a rose of Sharon ;
A lily of the vallies.

BRIDEGROOM.

- 2 As a lily among thorns,
So is my consort among the daughters.
SPOUSE.
3 As a citron tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my beloved among the sons.
In his shade I delighted and sat down,
And his fruit was sweet unto my taste.
4 He brought me into the house of wine,
And his banner over me was love.
5 ' Support me with refreshments ;
' Strew citrons round me,
' For I am sick of love.'
6 His left hand was under my head,
And his right hand embraced me.

CH. II.

- 7 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 Before the antelopes, and before the hinds of
 the field,
 That ye disturb not, nor awake
 This lovely one until she please.

SECTION IV. [2d Evening.]

SPOUSE.

- 8 The voice of my beloved ! behold, he cometh
 Leaping on the mountains, bounding on the
 hills.
 9 My beloved resembles an antelope, or a young
 hart.
 Behold him standing behind our wall ;
 Looking through the windows ;
 Displaying himself through the lattice work.
 10 My beloved answers, and speaks to me :

BRIDEGROOM.

- Arise, my consort, my beauty, and come away,
 11 For behold ! the winter is past ;
 The rain is over—is gone.
 12 The flowers appear upon the earth ;
 The time of the singing [of birds] is come ;
 The voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our
 land ;
 13 The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs ;
 The vines [with] their tender buds yield fra-
 grancy.
 Arise, my consort, my beauty, and come
 away !
 14 My Dove [who art] in the clefts of the rock,
 In the secret fissures of the cliffs,

CH. II.

Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy
voice,

For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance
is comely.

VIRGINS.

[*To the friends of the Bridegroom.*]

- 15 Take for us the foxes,
The little foxes that spoil our vines,
For our vines have tender buds.

SPOUSE.

- 16 My beloved is mine, and I am his ;
He feedeth among the lilies.
17 Until the day breathe, and the shades flee
away,
Return my beloved, and be unto me
Like an antelope, or a young hart,
Upon the craggy mountains.

SECTION V. [*3d Morning.*]

CH. III.

SPOUSE.

Upon my bed by night I sought him whom my
soul loveth :

I sought him, but I found him not.

- 2 ' I will arise now, and go about the city ;
' In the streets, and in the broad ways,
' I will seek him whom my soul loveth.'

I sought him, but I found him not.

- 3 The watchmen, who go round the city, found
me :

' Have ye seen him whom my soul loveth ?'

- 4 Scarcely had I passed from them,
When I found him whom my soul loveth :
I held him, and would not let him go,

CH. III.

- Until I had brought him to my mother's house,
 To the apartment of her who bore me.
 5 ' I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 ' By the antelopes, and by the hinds of the
 ' field,
 ' That ye disturb not, nor awake
 ' This lovely one until he please.'

SECTION VI. [3d Evening.]

FIRST VIRGIN.

- 6 What is this rising from the wilderness, like
 columns of smoke,
 Fuming with myrrh, and frankincense,
 More [precious] than all the powders of the
 merchant?

SECOND VIRGIN.

- 7 Behold! Solomon's own palanquin!
 Threescore warriors surround it, the war-
 riors of Israel,
 8 Every one having a sword, being skilled in
 war;
 Each [with] his sword upon his thigh,
 Because of danger in the night.

FIRST VIRGIN.

- 9 A carriage hath he made for himself,
 [Even] Solomon the king, of the wood of
 Lebanon.
 10 The pillars thereof hath he made of silver;
 Its carpet of gold,—its seat of purple:
 The midst thereof being lined with love,
 By the daughters of Jerusalem.

CH. III.

SECOND VIRGIN.

- 11 Go forth, ye daughters of Zion, and behold
 King Solomon
 In the crown wherewith his mother crowned
 him
 In the day of his espousals,
 In the day of the gladness of his heart.
-

SECTION VII. [4th Morning.]

CH. IV.

BRIDEGROOM.

- Behold thou art beautiful, my consort ;
 Behold thou art beautiful !
 Thine eyes are doves, behind thy veil.
 Thy hair is like a flock of goats,
 Which come up sleek from [mount] Gilead.
- 2 Thy teeth are like a flock [newly] shorn,
 Which ascend from the washing.
 All of them bearing twins,
 And none of them miscarrying.
- 3 Like a brede of scarlet are thy lips,
 And thy speech is agreeable.
 Like the flower of the pomegranate
 Are thy cheeks, behind thy veil.
- 4 Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded
 for an armoury ;
 A thousand bucklers hang thereon,
 All shields of mighty men.
- 5 Thy two breasts are like twin fawns of the
 antelope,
 Feeding among the lilies.
- 6 Until the day breathe, and the shades flee away,
 I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
 [And] to the hill of frankincense.

SECTION VIII. [4th Evening.]

BRIDEGROOM.

- 7 Thou art all beautiful, my consort,
And blemish is not in thee.
- 8 Come unto me from Lebanon, O spouse
[Come] unto me from Lebanon.
Look from the top of Amana,
From the top of Shenir and Hermon ;
From the dens of the lions,
From the mountains of the leopards.
- 9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, [my]
spouse,
Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine
eyes,
With one chain of thy neck.
- 10 How beautiful is thy love, my sister, [my]
spouse !
How much more excellent than wine ;
And the odour of thine ointments than all
perfumes !
- 11 Thy lips, O spouse, drop [as] the honey-
comb ;
Honey and milk are under thy tongue :
And the odour of thy garments is as the odour
of Lebanon.
- 12 A garden locked is my sister, [my] spouse ;
A well locked—a fountain sealed.
- 13 Thy shoots are a paradise of pomegranates,
Together with the precious fruits of cypresses,
and nards.
- 14 Spikenard and saffron—calamus and cinna-
mon—

CH. IV.

With all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and
aloes—

With all the principal aromatics.

- 15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,
And streams from Lebanon.

SPOUSE.

Awake, O north wind ! and come, O south,
Breathe upon my garden, that its aromatics
may flow out !

- 16 My beloved shall come into his garden,
And eat his precious fruits.

CH. V.

BRIDEGROOM.

I am come into my garden, my sister, [my]
spouse,

I have gathered my myrrh with my aromatics;

I have eaten my honey in the comb ;

I have drank my wine with my milk.

[*To the Companions.*]

Eat, O friends !

Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

SECTION IX. [*5th Morning.*]

SPOUSE.

- 2 I slept ; but my heart waked :

The voice of my beloved, [who was] knock-
ing :

‘ Open to me, my sister, my consort,

‘ My dove, my accomplished one ;

‘ For my head is filled with dew,

‘ And my locks with the drops of the night.

CH. V.

3 ' I have put off my vest, how shall I put it on ?
 ' I have washed my feet, how shall I defile
 them ?'

4 My beloved put forth his hand by the open-
 ing [of the door,]
 And my bowels were moved for him.

5 I rose to open to my beloved,
 But my hands dropped myrrh,
 And my fingers liquid myrrh,
 Upon the handles of the lock.

6 I opened to my beloved ;
 But my beloved had withdrawn—was gone.
 My soul fainted when he spake :
 I sought him, but could not find him ;
 I called him, but he gave me no answer.

7 The watchmen, who go round the city, found
 me :

They smote me—they hurt me :
 The keepers of the walls plucked my veil
 from me.

8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye
 find my beloved—
 What should ye tell him?—That I am sick
 with love.

VIRGINS.

9 What is thy beloved more than [another] be-
 loved ?

O most beautiful of women !

What is thy beloved more than [another] be-
 loved,

That so thou dost adjure us ?

SPOUSE.

10 My beloved is white and ruddy,
 The chief among ten thousand.

CH. V.

- 11 His head is wrought and pure gold :
His locks are bushy—black as a raven.
- 12 His eyes are like doves by canals of waters,
Washed in milk, sitting by the full [pool]
- 13 His cheeks are as beds of aromatics—
[As] towers of perfumes.
His lips, lilies dropping liquid myrrh.
- 14 His hands, rings of gold set with the tarshish :
His body, bright ivory covered with sapphires.
- 15 His legs, pillars of marble upon pedestals of
gold ;
His aspect, like Lebanon, noble as the cedars:
- 16 His mouth, sweetness itself ; yea he is altogether desirable !
This is my beloved, and this is my friend,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem !

CH. VI.

VIRGINS.

- 1 Whither is thy beloved gone,
O most beautiful of women ?
Whither is thy beloved turned aside ?
And we will seek him with thee.

SPOUSE.

- 2 My beloved is gone down into his garden,
Unto the beds of aromatics ;
To feed in his garden, and to gather lilies.
- 3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine :
He feedeth among the lilies.

SECTION X. [5th Evening.]

CH. VI.

BRIDEGROOM.

- 4 Beautiful art thou my consort, as Tirzah,

CH. VI.

Comely as Jerusalem, formidable as bannered
[towers.]

- 5 Turn away thine eyes from me,
For they have overcome me.
- 6 Thy hair is like a flock of goats,
Which [come up] sleek from Gilead.
Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep
Which ascend from the washing ;
All of them bearing twins,
And none of them miscarrying.
- 7 Like the flower of the pomegranate,
Are thy cheeks behind thy veil.
- 8 Threescore queens are they, and fourscore
concubines,
And virgins without number.
- 9 An only one is my dove, my accomplished
one ;
The only one of her mother,
The darling of her that bare her.
- The daughters saw her, and they blessed her ;
The queens and concubines, and they praised
her ;
- 10 ‘ Who is this that looketh forth as the dawn,
‘ Beautiful as the moon, splendid as the sun,
‘ And awful as the streamers ?’
- 11 Into the garden of nuts I went down,
To examine the fruits of the valley ;
To see if the vine budded,
If the pomegranates blossomed.
- 12 Ere I was aware, my soul, placed me
[As] on the chariots of Amminidab,

CH. VI.

VIRGIN 1.

13 Return, return, O Solima !

Return, return, that we may behold thee !

VIRGIN 2.

What would ye behold in Solima ?

VIRGIN 1.

As it were the chorus of two bands.

SECTION XI. [6th Morning.]

CH. VII.

FIRST VIRGIN.

How beautiful are thy feet in sandals,
O prince's daughter !The cincture of thy loins is like jewellery,
The work of an artist's hands.2 Thy clasp a round goblet, which wanteth not
mixed wine :Thy body a heap of wheat, encompassed with
lilies.

3 Thy breasts are like twin fawns of the roe :

4 Thy neck is like a tower of ivory.

Thine eyes are as the pools in Heshbon,
By the gate of Bath-rabbim :Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon,
Looking toward Damascus.

5 Thy head upon thee is like Carmel ;

And the tresses of thy head like the Porpura.

SECOND VIRGIN.

The king is detained in the galleries.

BRIDEGROOM.

6 How beautiful and how pleasing art thou, O
love, for delights !7 This thy stature is like the palm-tree,
And thy breasts are like [its] clusters.

CH. VII.

- 8 I said, I will ascend the palm-tree ;
 I will clasp its branches :
 And thy breasts shall be to me [as clusters of
 the vine,
 And the odour of thy breath like citrons.
- 9 Also thy palate is as the best wine,
 Which is sent to those whom I love for their
 integrity ;
 And causeth the lips of them who are asleep
 to murmur.

SPOUSE.

- 10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward
 me.

SECTION XII. [6th Evening.]

SPOUSE.

- 11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the
 fields,
 Let us lodge in the villages.
- 12 We shall be ready for the vineyards,
 We shall see whether the vine flourish,
 [Whether] the tender bud open,
 [Or] the pomegranate blossom.
 There will I grant thee my affections.
- 13 The mandrakes yield their odour,
 And over our gates are all precious fruits,
 Both new and old,
 [Which] my beloved, I have reserved for thee.

CH. VIII.

SPOUSE.

O that thou wert as my brother,
 That sucked the breasts of my mother !
 Should I find thee in the street,
 I would kiss thee, and not be despised.

CH. VIII:

- 2 I would lead thee, I would bring thee
Into the house of my mother, who would instruct me.

I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine,
Of the new wine of my pomegranates.

[*To the Virgins.*]

- 3 His left hand is under my head,
And his right hand embraceth me.
4 I adjure ye, O daughters of Jerusalem,
Why should ye disturb, or why awake
The lovely one, until it please him?

SECTION XIII. [*7th Morning.*]

VIRGINS.

- 5 Who is this that came from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved?

BRIDEGROOM.

Under the citron tree I courted thee;
There thy mother plighted thee unto me,
[Even] there she that bare thee plighted thee
unto me.

SPOUSE.

- 6 Place me as a signet upon thine heart,
As a signet upon thine arm:
For love is strong as death;
Jealousy is cruel as the grave;
The darts thereof are darts of fire,
Which have the fiery flame of JAH.
7 Many waters cannot quench love;
Neither can the floods drown it.
If a man would give all the substance of his
house for love,
It would utterly be contemned.

SECTION XIV. [7th Evening.]

SPOUSE.

- 8 We have a sister who is little, and her breasts
are not [grown ;]

What shall we do for our sister in the day that
she is spoken for ?

BRIDEGROOM.

- 9 If she be a wall, we will build on her turrets
of silver ;

If she be a door, we will enclose her with
boards of cedar :

SPOUSE.

- 10 I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers :
Thence was I in his eyes as one that findeth
peace.

TO THE VIRGINS.

- 11 Solomon hath a vineyard at Baal-hamon :
He hath let the vineyard to keepers,
Each shall bring for the fruit thereof a thou-
sand siverlings.

TO THE BRIDEGROOM.

- 12 My own vineyard is before me ;
A thousand to thee, O Solomon !
And two hundred to the keepers of its fruits.

BRIDEGROOM.

- 13 O thou who inhabitest the gardens,
The companions listen to thy voice,
Cause me to hear it !

SPOUSE.

- 14 Haste thee, my beloved,
And be thou like an antelope, or a young
hart,
Upon the craggy mountains.

END OF THE POEM.

A NEW
COMMENTARY
ON THE
SONG OF SOLOMON,
WITH NOTES.

T.

17102

COMMENTARY.

HAVING in the preliminary essays endeavoured to lead the reader into the true nature and design of this book, and the principles on which I conceive it ought to be explained, the object of this commentary is to apply those principles, as a key to open and expound the book.

I have given my reasons for considering this poem as an allegory—a sacred allegory describing the relation and communion between God, in the person of Christ, and his true church, or those individual believers of which the church is composed. It may be proper to enlarge a little on this general idea before we enter on the explanation of the song itself.

I have said that God is the Husband of his church, and have shewn that this idea pervades the scriptures of both testaments. In the Old Testament it is the Lord JEHOVAH who is thus described and represented as rejoicing over his church ‘as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his ‘bride;’ this character we have seen the ancient Jews applied to the MESSIAH—the MESSIAH applied it to himself—and the writers of the New Testament frequently represent him under the same character, and the church of God, as ‘the ‘bride, the LAMB’S wife.’ Now as ‘JEHOVAH ‘our God is one JEHOVAH;’ and as Christ Jesus

is the only head and husband of the church, we have here an argument for his divinity, that he is one with the Father, as well as with the church, and therefore properly and emphatically called 'JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' Indeed, I consider it as one of the most solid arguments on this topic, that though the sacred writers are always careful to distinguish between God and the highest creatures, and will not suffer an angel or a seraph to compare himself with Deity: yet in speaking of God and Christ, they frequently leave it in doubt, which is particularly intended—often use the terms as convertible and synonymous—and never betray the least fear lest, in consequence, too much honour or respect should be paid to the latter. On the contrary, our Lord himself teaches us that 'all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father; and that he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father;' a serious hint to those persons who seem to think that the honour of the Father cannot be secured but by the degradation of the Son.

The characters of bridegroom and bride, husband and spouse, imply the following relative ideas:

1. *Government and obedience*: 'He is thy LORD, and worship thou him.' Whatever evasions our *fair* companions may invent to vindicate their *supposed equality* with their husbands, they can have no place here. It is past a doubt that Christ is the sole head, and supreme governor of his church—and that he claims absolute

and unconditional submission and obedience. Nor can there be any thing painful in the idea to a believer, when it is considered that the object claiming this respect is perfect in wisdom and goodness, as well as power; and therefore can only employ his authority to the happiness and advantage of his people.

2. These relations imply *protection* and *reliance*. The husband is the natural and legal guardian of his spouse; to whom she is in all cases intitled to look for support and defence. The Lord has promised in all circumstances to be the defender of his people; and they are authorized in every situation to look up to him as their protector—‘a very present help in time of trouble.’

3. These relations imply reciprocal affection and attachment. Thus ‘Christ loved the church ‘and gave himself for it; that he might present ‘it to himself a glorious church, not having spot ‘or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it ‘should be holy and without blemish in his sight’.’ On the other hand the Lord demands the supreme and entire affection of his church. ‘Thou shalt ‘love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and ‘with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with ‘all thy strength’².’ The warmest conjugal affection, however it may exceed our love to the Redeemer, is but a faint image of his love to us.

4. They imply the most intimate union and communion superior to that of every other rela-

¹ Eph. v. 25—27.

² Matt. xxii. 37.

tion; for it is said, 'A man shall leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh:' The apostle Paul applies this spiritually. 'This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.' Jesus the Son of God, left the bosom of his Father in the mansions of eternal glory, and demonstrated his infinite affection by dying for his church upon the cross.

5. Marriage induces a common property between the parties: thus, in a spiritual sense, whatever is ours, whether health or wealth, or life itself, is certainly the Lord's: and so on the other hand, it is our unspeakable privilege, that, whatever belongs to Christ in his mediatorial character, as the head and husband of the church is also our's. Thus runs the inventory of the believer. 'All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are your's; and ye are Christ's: and Christ is God's.'

6. These relations imply permanency and fidelity; for the love of this state should not be transient nor changeable; but durable as life itself. Such is the love of Christ; eternal, because he is eternal: such is the love of believers; immortal, because they are immortal. And 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay: in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'

In consequence of the fidelity required on the part of the church, idolatry, of every kind, is spiritual adultery, and as offensive to the Lord, as infidelity to the marriage bed must be to an affectionate husband. This is true, not only of idol worship, or the worship of improper objects; but also of all inordinate affection to the world, and its enjoyments. So, covetousness is idolatry,¹ and as such, a species of spiritual adultery. Thus saith the Spirit to the angel of the church in Thyatira: ‘I know thy works:—
 ‘notwithstanding I have a few things against
 ‘thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel,
 ‘which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach,
 ‘and to seduce my servants to commit fornication,
 ‘and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.
 ‘And I gave her space to repent of her fornications,
 ‘and she repented not. Behold, I will
 ‘cast her into a bed², and them that commit
 ‘adultery with her, into great tribulation, except
 ‘they repent of their deeds³.’ From this
 ‘passage, taken in connexion with the context,
 it appears that *heresy*³ as well as idolatry, is considered by the Head of the church as spiritual adultery, and as such resented and punished by him: for it should seem, it is the heresy of the

¹ ‘A bed,’ namely of sickness and affliction: but the king’s MS. reads *εἰς φυλάκην*, ‘into prison.’

² Rev. ii. 19—24.

³ By heresy, I understand such a deviation from the grand and fundamental truths of the gospel, as is inconsistent with Christian communion, and consequently forms a *sect*, which is the primitive idea of the word *αἵρεσις*, heresy.

Gnostics, who penetrated 'the depths of Satan' and 'the doctrines concerning demons,' which are here particularly alluded to.

Having thus far considered the conjugal characters of Christ and the church, it is proper to enquire who are intended, mystically, by 'the virgins, the daughters of Jerusalem,' and 'the companions of the bridegroom.' Commentators seem divided on this subject; but we have a happy clue to our enquiry in an infallible expositor. When the dispute was agitated between the disciples of John and those of Jesus, why the former fasted, and not the other: Jesus calls his own disciples 'children of the bride-chamber', which seems of the same import with companions 'of the bride-groom:' These are introduced in two parts of the song in a manner corresponding to their office, which was to wait upon, and occasionally negotiate between the parties, as well as to partake of the marriage feast. John the Baptist assumes this character when he calls himself 'the friend of the bridegroom',² rejoicing to hear his voice. This character seems to answer then to the ministers of the gospel: as we shall find what is said of them does to their office.

'The daughters of Jerusalem' are literally its inhabitants, and more particularly, the ladies of the palace, and the female attendants on the Ha-

¹ Matt. ix. 15.

² John iii. 29.

ram, or apartments of the women : but who are mystically intended, is a more difficult question.

That it cannot design mere hypocrites, which are always hateful in the sight of God, is, I think, sufficiently obvious from the manner in which they are introduced, and spoken of, as well as from their bearing the character of virgins who love the bridegroom. And yet it seems desirable to make some distinction between the bride and her attendants¹. I should suppose therefore that the daughters of Jerusalem may intend ‘ young converts,’ or such persons whose hearts are touched by divine grace, and attracted by the charms of piety and holiness; but not yet admitted into their full privileges as believers, nor enjoying that complete communion of established Christians. In this interpretation I meet the ideas of Dr. GILL, and the best spiritual expositors.

So much for the *characters* of this poem : our next enquiries should be directed to the *time* and *scenery*; avoiding as much as possible the use of terms, which, though harmless in themselves, are profaned by their application to a licentious theatre.

The time we have supposed to be the *seven* days which the Jewish weddings lasted; but these days are divided, in the manner of the Hebrews, into evening and morning, which seem

¹ It may be thought, that if the spouse intends the Jewish church, these virgins may be proselytes from the Gentiles: but then why call them daughters of Jerusalem? The daughters of a *place* are in scripture language its inhabitants. See Luke xxiii. 28.

sufficiently distinguished by internal marks, as I shall endeavour to shew in the sequel of this commentary: but as the whole of this is matter of hypothesis, rather than absolute certainty, I have marked the periods only as distinct sections, adding the common divisions of chapter and verse, for the sake of reference, as in our common versions.

It is an important observation of Bp. PERCY¹, that the marriage festivals of the Hebrews began on the morning after the celebration of the nuptials, which always took place at night. Here therefore the Song begins; and this sufficiently accounts for the poet introducing no account of the ceremony, though most of the circumstances are afterward alluded to. He adds, that after the consummation of the marriage on the first night, the bride and bridegroom associated only in the day time during the continuance of the feast, which accounts for the bridegroom's absence during two nights particularly mentioned.

The ingenious Bossuet observes, that every part of the Canticles abounds in poetic beauties: and he shews 'the objects which present themselves on every side' to be either in themselves 'the most beautiful in nature,' or rendered so 'by contrast' with others which are terrific and sublime; 'the dens of the lions,' and 'the mountains of the leopards.'—These beauties it will be part of our employment to survey as we travel through them: and to direct our views to objects of a spiritual nature, still more beautiful and sublime.

¹ New Translation, p. 19. See also LEWIS'S Heb. Antiq. Vol. III. p. 308.

SECTION I.

Ch. I. ver. 2—4.

[FIRST DAY.—*Morning.*]

Spouse. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth !
 For better is thy love than wine :
 Because of the odour of thy good ointments
 (Thy name is as ointment poured out)
 Therefore do the virgins love thee.
 O draw me !

Virgins. After thee will we run.

Spouse. The king hath brought me into his chambers.

Virgins. We will be glad and rejoice in thee :
 We will celebrate thy love more than wine.
 The upright love thee.

THE scene of this first section is evidently the royal apartments of the women, called by the Hebrews *Hadarim*, and by the Turks, the *Ha-rem*. Here the royal spouse is supposed to be newly introduced, and is accompanied by the virgin daughters of Jerusalem, her attendants.—The time appears to be the *morning*; because she purposes to meet her beloved in his noon retirement; and, as I conceive, the morning after the celebration of the nuptials.

The poem commences with an abrupt expression of the attachment of the spouse to her beloved, without naming the object of her affections: a circumstance which strongly indicates their sincerity and ardour. This is, literally taken, a poetical beauty; and spiritually understood, highly characteristic of a mind full of sentiments of piety and devotion. The church is supposed to be deeply engaged in meditating on his expected appearance, who is styled, ‘the

‘ desire of all nations,’ but was most eminently so of the believing Jews, who ‘ waited for his salvation.’ Thus the elegiac prophet, full of his afflictions, and deeply impressed with a conviction that they sprang not out of the dust, thinks it unnecessary to name their author.

‘ I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of HIS wrath.

‘ HE hath brought me into darkness, and not into light.

So Mary Magdalen, when she supposed herself conversing with the gardener, seemed to think it unnecessary to name the object of her solicitude—‘ Sir, if thou hast borne HIM hence, ‘ tell me where thou hast laid him.’ Her mind was full of Jesus, and she thought that he also occupied the attention of all others. Such is the frame of soul, in which the church—the believer exclaims,

‘ Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.’

We may write here, as the heathen inscribed upon their temples—‘ Far hence be the profane !’ A kiss was a token of reconciliation and submission, and was thus figuratively used by David in a similar application : ‘ Kiss the son lest he be ‘ angry.’

But the kiss here is intended as a mark of conjugal affection. ‘ Now the king hath honoured ‘ me with the character and rank of a royal bride, ‘ let him not withhold the tokens of his conjugal ‘ affection.’

Profane minds may ridicule images borrowed from conjugal affections and embraces, as if these

were something impure or improper; but the holy Author of this state hath sanctified it by his appointment, his blessing, and the adoption of these images in many parts of scripture; and ' what God hath cleansed let no man call common or unclean.'

The expression, ' kisses of his mouth,' hath been marked as hebraistic and poetical: it certainly well agrees with the antiquity and simplicity of the language; but it is not merely redundant, or emphatical: it distinguishes the kiss of love from that of mere submission and obedience. Servants and subjects might be allowed to kiss the hands or feet of their prince; but to be kissed by him, to be favoured with ' the kisses of his ' mouth,' implies the highest degree of familiarity and affection.

The next line introduces a change of persons in my conception highly beautiful and poetical. I see no reason for supposing, as many have done, that the king is introduced here, or in any part of this section. It appears to me to injure the beauty of the following sentiments. But the change of person is another mark of the situation of the speaker's mind. The same principle on which we account for the omission of her beloved's name, will account for this change of person. The same love which so engrossed her mind as to render it superfluous to name the object of her attachment, realized his image, and led her to speak as if he had been present, without that

restraint which his presence might have imposed¹.

‘ Because better is thy love² than wine.’ It is the excellency of this love that made the spouse so anxious for discoveries of it. The term for *love* is plural in the original, as intending the various instances of this love, and the different methods in which it is displayed: it might therefore have been rendered *affections*, but I have not thought the change important.

The love of God has been compared to *wine*, both for its qualities and effects. The qualities of good wine, are age and strength: the love of Christ is ‘ stronger than death,’ and more antient, for it is from everlasting: but the *effects* of good wine are chiefly pointed at when it is employed as a sacred metaphor.

‘ Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,
‘ And wine to those that be bitter of soul³.’

The discoveries of divine love then are more animating and consolatory than wine is to the faint and heavy hearted.

The literal sense of the following verse is, that the king’s fame attracted love and admiration.

¹ Those who suppose this poem to have been sung as an epithalamium, or to include part of the processional songs, consider these verses as part of the chorus; but I consider this as a circumstance so very uncertain that I have not ventured to offer any opinion on it.

² The LXX, Vulgate, and Arabic, both here and in verse 4, read ‘ breasts,’ instead of ‘ loves,’ but they are not supported by MSS. and the common reading seems preferable.

³ Prov. xxxi, 6. Margin.

1. The king's name is compared to 'good ointments,' not medicinal, but such as were used for perfume, which alone are uniformly intended in this song. For though perfumes employed by men are considered as marks of effeminacy with us, it is far otherwise in the east, especially on nuptial occasions. In the 45th psalm not only is the king said to be 'anointed with the oil of gladness;' but even his garments to be perfumed with 'myrrh, aloes, and cassia.' The same custom obtains among the Turks and Arabians to this day¹. The comparison imports, that as liquid perfume, poured out, diffuses its fragrance around; so the report of the king's virtues and greatness, attracted the love and admiration of all who heard it. Thus Solomon elsewhere observes, 'A good name is better than precious ointment²;' and Martial has told us that the names of lovers to each other are *sweeter than nectar*³.

The application of this in the allegory is both easy and beautiful. It is the great object of the gospel to exalt King Messiah, and to spread the honour of his name: the victories of the cross, and the labours of redeeming love, have a strong attractive power to draw enquiring souls to Christ; and he is exalted to this end, that he might in this manner draw all men unto him. Commentators, in general, apply the expression of ointments and

¹ Harmer on Song of Sol. p. 120, 123.

² Eccles. vii. 1.

³ Lib. ix. Ep. 9.

perfumes mystically to the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, with which our Lord Jesus Christ was anointed beyond measure : and it is true, by these influences alone men are drawn unto him : as we may more particularly observe on the first clause of the following verse :

‘ O draw me !’ ABEN EZRA, and some others, understand this as the language of the virgins severally expressed ; but it appears to me much more natural to divide the line as I have done on the suggestion of Bishop PATRICK, and understand this clause as an apostrophe to the beloved — ‘ *O draw me !*—Draw me with the report of thy virtues and excellencies ! Draw me with the discoveries of thy kindness, and affections ! Draw me with the fragrance of thy perfumes :—that is, spiritually, by the gracious influences of thy good Spirit.’

This drawing, as GILL observes, implies no restraint or violence upon the will. The sick are drawn by the report of a good physician, or a medical spring : the poor are drawn by a character of extensive benevolence and liberality : all men feel more or less the attractions of interest or of pleasure ; and none complain of it as a violence : so it was an especial promise of the Messiah, ‘ And ‘ I, when I am lifted up, will draw all men unto ‘ me.’

The drawing here intended does not, however, so much express the first drawing of the soul to God in conversion, as the subsequent drawings of the Spirit into closer communion and greater conformity to Christ.

‘ After thee will we run¹ :’ These I suppose to be the words of the virgins to the spouse, intimating that, if she followed the bridegroom, they would follow her, drawn and excited as well by her charms, as by those of her beloved : and the expression may furnish us with this remark ; that there is a charm in genuine practical religion, and in examples of piety and virtue, which wins the hearts of all around, and is particularly engaging to young disciples, and candid enquirers after divine truth : ‘ Let your light so shine before men ‘ that they, seeing your good works, may glorify ‘ your Father who is in heaven.’ St. PETER gives a particular exhortation to the fair sex on this head ; which, as it is scripture, I may be permitted to transcribe. ‘ Likewise, ye wives, ‘ be in subjection to your own husbands ; that, ‘ if any obey not the word, they also may without ‘ the word be won by the conversation of the ‘ wives, while they behold your chaste conversa- ‘ tion coupled with fear².’

The words, ‘ after thee will we RUN,’ certainly express alacrity, cheerfulness and diligence in the ways of God, which are the consequences of divine drawings, attended with the encouragement of good example, and pious exhortation.

In the next line the spouse declares her marriage. ‘ The king hath brought me into his

¹ The LXX, Vulgate, and Arabic, add, ‘ Because of thy good ointments,’ which is only the repetition of a preceding line, perhaps, by way of elucidation, but adds nothing to the meaning.

² 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.

‘ chambers ;’ that is, ‘ he hath admitted me to be ‘ his wife,’ he hath already honoured me with this dear and dignified relation, and I am here waiting till he arrives and favours me with his company. —From this simple idea, applied spiritually¹, we may observe,

1. That spiritual communion is the great end of our relation to Jesus Christ. What avail our assumption of his name, and boasting that we are Christians, if we know nothing of communion with the Author of christianity. He hath promised us his presence whenever we assemble in his name : yea, he hath said, ‘ If any man keep ‘ my commandments I will come unto him, and ‘ sup with him, and he with me.’

2. That those who are found in Christ’s chambers were *brought* there by his grace : or, in other words, those who are truly believers in Jesus Christ—who are the bride, the Lamb’s wife—are made such, brought into that relation, and enjoy those privileges purely through the grace of God.

3. That the church’s business, in Christ’s chambers, is to *wait* for his presence. This he hath promised, and though he may seem to tarry,

¹ The Cabbalists have an observation, that wherever *the king* is spoken of absolutely in this song, it is the King Messiah who is intended ; but we have already settled this point, that Solomon was a type of Christ, and that he is mystically intended throughout the whole of this poem. They suppose also the *chambers* to allude to the chambers of the temple : I would rather say, they refer to every place in which God is worshipped in spirit and in truth through Christ Jesus, whether the temple, the church, or the private chamber.

it is our duty to wait for him : ‘ For he hath not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face, in vain.’ All attempts or pretensions to worship, that have not this for their end and aim, are hypocritical and unacceptable to God.

In the next lines we have, 1. the joy of the virgins in the happiness of the spouse, ‘ We will be glad and rejoice in thee :’—2. The manner in which they express their joy, ‘ We will celebrate thy love more than wine :’—and, 3. the ground of this joy and pleasure, ‘ The upright love thee.’

Each of these circumstances may furnish a useful remark.

1. From the joy of the virgins we may observe, that it is a happy omen for us when we can rejoice in the church’s happiness—‘ They shall prosper that pray for her.’—It is natural enough, indeed, to rejoice in the growth and prosperity of our party ; but to rejoice in the work and grace of God as such, without a reference to the honour of our party, or our own instrumentality, is a happy proof that we love God, and make his interest ours.

2. The virgins purpose to express their joy in celebrating the spouse’s love, or, as I understand it rather, in celebrating their mutual loves, in nuptial songs and congratulations. The mutual loves of Christ and his church are generally the favourite theme of young Christians—they are the friends of the bride that rejoice to hear her voice—that rejoice to join with her in the praises of the

beloved—that prefer the happiness of Zion to their chief joy ; or, as the expression here is, that celebrate her love ‘ more than wine’—more than all the conveniencies, comforts, and felicities of human life.

3. The ground of all this is integrity and uprightness of heart—‘ The upright love thee’.¹ Man is a fallen creature, by nature destitute of love to God and goodness : grace alone makes man upright, and fills the heart with divine love : and in proportion as this grace prevails that love will more and more abound. The notion of loving virtue for its own sake, independent of love to God, and irrespective of his love to us, is a fiction of infidel philosophy.

Ver. 5, 6.

Spouse. Dark am I, but comely, ye daughters of Jerusalem,
As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.
Gaze not upon me because I am black—
Because the sun hath beamed on me.
My mother’s sons were angry with me ;
They made me keeper of the vineyards :
Mine own vineyard have I not kept.

These verses contain an apology for the spouse’s complexion, which it has been found difficult to explain literally, and no less so to apply figuratively. Let us examine it. Her complexion was *dark*² ; not naturally, but accidentally ; and yet

¹ *Aben Ezra* takes מְשֻׁרִים for the adjective to wine—‘ wine that goes down smoothly ;’ but I conceive the common rendering to be more just and better sense.

² ‘ Dark am I but comely.’—The original word (שָׁהָר), which I have rendered *dark*, properly intends the dusk or early dawn.—Bp. PATRICK.

‘ Gaze not.’—The common rendering ‘ look not,’ is too

her person was beautiful. She was 'dark as the tents of Kedar,' or of the Arabians, which, according to some writers, were made of black goat's hair, or, according to others, died black. The comparing her complexion to these tents may be a poetical exaggeration, to heighten the beauty of the contrast with the curtains of Solomon, probably those of his pavilion or state tent, which were doubtless very superb and beautiful; for the easterns spare no expence in these cases'. Of this Mr. HARMER² gives some remarkable instances from the travels of Egmont and Hayman. The tent of the grand signior was covered and lined with silk. More recently, Nadir Shaw had a very superb one covered on the outside with scarlet broad cloth, and lined within with violet-coloured satin, ornamented with a great variety of animals, flowers, &c. formed entirely of pearls and precious stones³.

To account for her dark complexion, she mentions her exposure to the 'scorching sun,' which

weak; the word evidently means to look stedfastly, with attention and admiration. See Gen. vi. 12. Prov. xxiii. 31.

Six MSS. read (and two more did read) *חִירָאוֹנִי* 'fear not,' which reading is preferred by Doderlein, but I conceive, without sufficient reason.

¹ The LXX read *δερμας*, the skins of Solomon, supposing his curtains to be made of skins, which is possible enough: but one would have hardly thought it possible that a commentator and a bishop could have been weak enough to apply it to the sleekness of Solomon's own skin! as Bp. Foliot did in the twelfth century.

² Memoirs of Khojah Abdulkurreem, p. 31.

³ On Sol. Song, p. 186.

had ‘darted his full beams’ upon her¹. For though the natives of Egypt are generally dark, and far southward toward Ethiopia, almost black²; yet those of high rank being protected from the sun are pretty fair, and would be reckoned such even in Britain. Mr. HARMER conceives the complexion of this princess might have been spoiled by her journey to Judea; but this appears to me very improbable. The sacred poet clearly attributes it to the anger of her brothers, who, perhaps piqued at her superior talents, or offended

¹ ‘The sun hath beamed on me.’—This word (שָׁרַח); which is evidently poetic, is used only in two other passages, both in Job, where I think it will scarcely bear any other rendering than I have given it. Chap. xx. 9. ‘The eye which beamed on him shall not add’ [to beam on him:] i. e. shall beam on him no more. Chap. xxviii. 7. ‘The vulture’s eye hath not beamed on it.’—Mr. PARKHURST says ‘glanced;’ but that term is too weak to express such an action of the sun as materially tans the complexion.

² ‘Because I am black.’—Some critics have suggested that the spouse was literally a black, the daughter of an Ethiopian woman: but 1. This agrees not with her own account, that her complexion was occasioned by exposure to the sun. 2. It agrees not with the subsequent description that her cheeks were like the pomegranate, &c. 3. There is no ground for it in the text; the term black, applied to the countenance, in other texts not intending absolute but comparative and adventitious blackness—the effect of grief, famine, &c.

The original word here is the same as in the preceding verses, only rendered more emphatical by the reduplication of the two last radicals (שׁוּחַחֲחִי) ‘valde fusca,’ *Bochart*. ‘Prorsus, vel valde, et tota nigra,’ *Markius, Michaelis*. So Gill—‘very black.’ See (in Heb.) Ps. xlv. 5. Prov. viii. 31.

with her religion¹, had occasioned her being sent to a more southerly part of the country, where she had neglected her personal charms, and, by exposure to the sun, become very swarthy. One of those revolutions common in eastern courts, where every thing usually depends on the caprice of the prince, or of his favourite, might occasion her recal; the beauty of her features might on this occasion be the more remarked; and reaching the ears of the king of Israel, together with her conversion, might lay the foundation of her future fortune.

That she was sent to keep vineyards need not be literally taken. Her meaning may be, that she was sent to reside among them, as if she had been employed in a menial capacity—as a keeper of the vineyards; or, it is probable she might have the care and management of some infant sisters, and thus have been the guardian of their beauty, while she neglected her own. And this may be intended by her *vineyard*, as being the natural object of a virgin's care; since the Jews by this term usually intend whatever is a person's proper duty or employment². It is possible, however, the words may admit a literal interpretation, for she

¹ In the *preliminary essays* (page 67) I have hinted the probability that this lady was a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and if we allow ourselves to suppose her conversion to have taken place early in life, it will very sufficiently account for the anger and resentment of her brothers; and the report of this circumstance afterward would be a powerful recommendation to the court of Solomon.

² See Bp. *Patrick's* Paraphrase, and Mr. *Binnel* in Bp. *Percy*. So Dr. *Gill* remarks, Horace calls his own works, 'Vineta.'—Epist. 1. lib. ii.

had a vineyard of her own, and might have superintended it herself, before she let it out to keepers¹.

Let us now consider the allegorical application of the passage. Most commentators have referred this to moral defilement. The TARGUM applies it to the idolatry of the golden calf by the Israelites, that then ‘their faces became as *black*² as ‘the Ethiopians who dwell in the *tents* of *Kedar* ;’ but afterwards, on *repentance* and *forgiveness*, ‘beautiful and bright as those of angels.’ And St. AUGUSTINE says, the church is ‘black by ‘nature, and beautiful by grace.’ But these applications are evidently contrary to the text, which supposes the blackness here spoken of to be, not natural, but acquired and adventitious; and at the same time consistent with her beauty—‘black ‘but comely.’

The ancient book of ZOHAR explains this blackness much better of a state of captivity or slavery: black with grief, mourning and astonishment. So David in his mourning was ‘*black* all ‘the day long: and Jeremiah was *black* with grief and sorrow³. There is perhaps in this expression a distant allusion to the state of Israel in Egypt (a circumstance not unlikely to be known to Pharaoh’s daughter) when they were reduced to the vilest servitude, exposed to the fiercest sun-beams, and at the same time, mourning un-

¹ Chap. viii. 12.

In all languages *black* signifies any thing that is ‘sad, ‘dismal, cruel or unfortunate.’ Daubuz in Rev. vi. 5.

³ Psal. xxxviii. 6. in Heb. Jer. viii. 21. xiv. 2. See also Job xxx. 30. Joel ii. 6. Nah. ii. 10.

der their affliction. So in Psalm lxviii¹, Mr. HARMER² thinks there is a comparison between Israel and those doves, which, resorting to the caves where the shepherds make their fires, are blackened with the smoke ; where there is an opposition somewhat similar in the terms—‘ though ye are *black* with having lain among the pots, yet shall ye be *beautiful* as the sacred doves of Syria, covered with silver and with gold.’—The blackness in this case, it may be observed, was occasioned by the heat of fire, as in the other by the sun-beams.

This blackness being attributed to the force of the sun-beams, reminds us of our Lord’s parable of the sower³, in which he compares the heat of persecution to that of the sun. And these circumstances laid together, I think, lead us to explain the blackness of the church, of her sufferings by ‘ tribulation and persecution,’ which may very properly be attributed to the envy and anger of her elder brethren of the world⁴ ; for as Cain to Abel, so is the world the elder brother of the church.

This complexion is also perfectly consistent with her beauty ; for, though despicable in the eyes of the world, the church never suffered any thing in her real excellency, and acceptableness in the sight of God, by persecution or affliction. Indeed, when most black in this respect, she has

¹ Ver 13.

² Observations on Passages of Scripture, vol. III. No. 17.

³ Matt. xiii. 5, 21.

See Luke xv. 25.

generally been most amiable in herself, and in the esteem of her heavenly bridegroom.

The manner in which the bride accounts for her complexion, and apologises to the daughters of Jerusalem, merits a remark. She concedes willingly, that she was *dark*, and was apprehensive that to others she might appear even *very black*; but she justifies herself as innocent of the cause—it was the fault of her enemies, not her own. If this were applied to moral defilement it were unaccountable; God forbid we should make apologies for sin! But applied to tribulation and persecution it is easy, natural and just. However the state of the church, and of believers, may render tribulation or persecution necessary, it is not for evil-doing, but for well-doing, that they are called to suffer from the world; and they may with a good conscience justify themselves in this respect; of which we have many instances in the Scriptures.

As the beauty of the church is so fully considered in the sequel, there seems no necessity for enlarging here. The phrase, ‘mine own vine-yard have I not kept,’ is a concession, in whatever way it may be taken, that she had been guilty of negligence: a concession always seasonable and in character: for though the church is persecuted for her virtues, and not her crimes; yet as we said, it is the negligence and languor of the church, which is the occasion of her being brought into such circumstances, to refine and purify her.

“ They made me keeper of the vineyard,’ they put me to base and laborious servitude. This has been often literally true in times of persecution. Israel, in Egypt, were enjoined to *make bricks even without straw*; and allowed no time for their own rest, or the service of their God. And in the Christian church many confessors and martyrs have been put to labour in the mines, or at the gallies, without the least mercy or indulgence; and innumerable others forbidden the worship of their God. They have kept the vineyard of others, but have not been suffered to attend their own.

The words admit a farther practical application. It too often happens, that persons in public characters, either magistrates or teachers, who are faithful and active in their charge, neglect their own personal interest—I mean in a moral and religious view. They keep the vineyards of others—they guard their morals and direct their piety—but they deprive themselves of their seasons of retirement—they neglect their personal devotions—and thus, while they are in the constant habits of doing good to others, they neglect themselves—they keep the vineyard of others and neglect their own. This is a proper subject for confession and regret.

This section concludes with an apostrophe to the beloved, and the reply of the virgins; both in the language of pastoral poetry.

Ver. 7, 8.

Spouse. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest?

Where thou causest [thy flock] to rest at noon?

For why should I be as a stranger

Among the flocks of thy companions?

Virgins. If thou thyself knowest not, O most beautiful of women,

Go thy way forth by the footsteps of this flock,

And feed thy kids among the tents of these shepherds.

On these verses, in a literal sense, we may remark.

1. The pastoral images employed. I have already observed the analogy between the regal and pastoral offices, and have supposed that the allusions made to the latter refer literally to the exercise of government, and administration of justice; if so the resting at noon will signify the relaxation of public business, and the luxury (for such it must be to wise and good princes) of retirement and privacy. The language of the bride then is an enquiry, in the passionate manner of apostrophe, where the king was, and whether employed in public or in private. ‘ If he be, like
‘ a good shepherd feeding his flock, administering
‘ public benefits, and dispensing judgment, why
‘ should not I enjoy the common benefit? If he
‘ be indulging in retirement, why may not I, who
‘ am admitted as his wife, enjoy his company and
‘ conversation?’

The translation of this verse is so difficult, that I feel myself diffident and undecided; and shall therefore include both the renderings in the mar-

gin, as consistent in the general idea, though I have preferred in the version, that which appeared to me the most natural and easy¹.

It should seem necessary, however, in the first place, to settle the meaning of the expression, 'By the flocks of thy companions.' It appears that eastern marriages were frequently celebrated in tents, which on grand occasions were doubtless superb and numerous²: pastoral language converts these into the tents of shepherds, and the attendants into sheep. In this view the words

¹ If the original word [עָנַן] be derived from the root [עָנַן], to hurry or drive away [as I consider the roots of three radicals with final *He* originally the same with those of two radicals without *He*], the sense will be nearly that of our translators—'one that turneth aside,' wandereth, or is driven away [עַל] to, beyond or among the flocks of thy companions. So the *Targum*, *Kimchi*, *Dathe*, &c.

But *Michaelis*, *Piscator*, *Cœcius*, *Martinus*, &c. chuse to follow the Septuagint, who have rendered it (περιβαλλομένη) *veiled*, [deriving it regularly from [עָנַן] to cover, veil, i. e. *cast* something *hastily* and loosely over a person;] the meaning will then be, 'Why should I be overlooked, neglected, as if I was not one of the flock of thy companions, that is, one of thy wives?' The veil was also in one case a mark of widowhood, and in another of harlotry; it may therefore be explained, 'Why should I appear as a widow, or an harlot, rather than be treated as a lawful wife?'

A learned friend suspects that the compound particle (עַל־מֶן) *for why*, should be taken as the proper name 'Solomon,' the letters being the same (and *De Rossi* suspects the pointing to be wrong)—in which case the verse would read thus:

'O Solomon, shall I be as a stranger?' &c. but as this wants authority, though I admire the spirit of this version, I have not ventured to adopt it.

* Harmer on Sol. Song, p. 201,

import, ‘ Why should I be forsaken and neglected by him, as if I had belonged to another shepherd, that is, to some of the princes or nobles encamped around?’

If we prefer the other rendering, ‘ Why should I appear as one *veiled*’—considering the veil as a token of widowhood¹, or harlotry²; then the expression means, ‘ Why should I appear as a widow, or be treated as an harlot, when I am the bride of Solomon.’

The mention of ‘ the shepherds tents,’ in the following verse, shews that shepherds when they met with good pasturage, used to pitch their tents; and there they generally continued till the want of fresh pasturage led them farther: and the supposition of the shepherd retiring with his flock to rest at noon, is perfectly agreeable to the eastern manners. PLATO³ speaks of sheep *nooning* themselves, and VIRGIL⁴ informs us that the shepherds usually retired with their flocks to some shady retreat at the fourth hour, or two hours before noon.

2. The reply of the virgins demands our next attention, it comprizes these directions—seek him in the way himself hath marked out—follow him in the traces of his flock—wait for him among the tents of his shepherds.

This idea strikes out an easy and simple me-

¹ Ezek. xxiv. 17, 22.

² Phædrus.

³ Gen. xxxviii. 14.

⁴ Georg. lib. iii.

thod of allegorizing this section, which may suggest several natural and useful remarks, without the danger of losing ourselves in wanton or unintelligible fancies.

1. We remark the office of Christ as a SHEPHERD. So under the Old Testament, Messiah was designated by this character: 'Awake, O sword, against my SHEPHERD, against the man that is my fellow (or companion) saith the LORD of Hosts'.¹ He claims himself the character of 'the *good* shepherd²,' and he is styled, by the different writers of the New Testament, the *great* shepherd, the *chief* shepherd, the shepherd and bishop of our souls; and he well answers to every part of the shepherd's character. Does it require knowledge, care, attention? He says, 'I know my sheep, I call them by their names, they hear my voice and follow me.'—Does it imply defence, support, protection? 'The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He leadeth me into green pastures, beside the still waters.' 'He restoreth my soul: yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they shall comfort me.'—Does this office require tenderness and affection? 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his bosom, and carry them in his arms, and gently lead those that are with young.'—

¹ Zech. xiii. 7.

² John x. 11.

‘ I am (saith he) the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.’

2. We might run a like parallel between the character of *sheep*, and that of believers. Sheep are remarked as harmless, clean, simple, useful creatures: sociable, but too apt to wander; defenceless, and therefore often injured. All these particulars apply beautifully to the flock of Christ, whether under the Old Testament or the New. They are, in their degree, ‘ holy, harmless and ‘ undefiled.’ They naturally associate together, yet are too apt to ‘ wander from the fold of God;’ they are the most useful members of society, yet often abused and persecuted; as it is written, ‘ For thy sake are we killed all the day long: we ‘ are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’

3. We observe more particularly the manner in which Christ executes his pastoral office: he feeds them, and causes them to rest at noon.—He *feeds* them: this seems to include or to imply all the various offices which Christ executes as our Redeemer. He is a *king*, and feeding implies (as already noted) the exercise of his regal government.—He is a prophet, and feeds them ‘ with knowledge and understanding.’—He is a priest, and strange and incongruous as it may seem, he feeds them with his own ‘ flesh and ‘ blood,’ which he hath given for their redemption—for this good shepherd hath laid down his life for his sheep.

He ‘ causes them to rest at noon;’ that is, in the hottest seasons of persecution, in the

severest times of tribulation, the Lord Jesus hath a retreat for his people. ‘Come my people (saith he) enter into the chambers, and hide yourselves for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast’.¹ When the church is persecuted in the book of Revelation, a retreat is prepared for her in the ‘wilderness,’ and so the Lord preserves a seed to serve him in despite of the rage of all his enemies. But when it is necessary for the honour of his cause, that they should come forward and boldly witness for his name, even to the death, then his chariots of celestial fire await to bear them to glory and an immortal crown.

4. We may observe the language and argument of the spouse—‘*O thou whom my soul loveth,*’ ‘why dost *thou* withhold thy presence, and treat me as a stranger, unknown and unbeloved by thee?—As a harlot, apostate from thy love? or as a widow, deserted and forsaken?’ Note, (1.) The Lord’s own people are subject to the withdrawments of his presence, and to mental distress, not only the same as others, but peculiar to themselves. (2.) That our love to Christ, as it is a principle implanted by his grace, may be pleaded as an argument for farther mercies: ‘Forsake not thou the work of thine own hands.’ (3.) True believers are subject to be mistaken for hypocrites and mere professors. They may ap-

¹ Isa. xxvi. 20.

pear so much alike, either by the declension of the one, or the imitation of the other, that no eye but that which searches hearts may be able certainly to distinguish them.

5. In the answer returned by the virgins, we may learn how we are to discover the pastures of the good shepherd: or in other words, the paths of truth and holiness; for to both these may the direction be applied: ‘Go forth by the foot-steps of the flock.’

(1.) This method is recommended in our enquiries after *truth*; ‘Stand ye in the way, and ask for the old paths, that ye may walk therein.’ The misfortune has been, that, in this case, many have begun their researches at too late a period. Instead of enquiring the sentiments of those venerable men, the prophets and apostles, they have contented themselves with the opinions of the doctors of the second and third century, or later, when the church was already corrupted with error and with heresy; and when the writers often became so heated and perplexed with controversy, that they not only contradicted one another, but themselves; and it is in many cases impossible to get a clear and determinate opinion from them.

(2.) In seeking for examples to regulate our conduct we should apply to the same authorities. Christ himself is the first and best example in all cases, where his example will apply: and after him his apostles and first ministers, the Christian

fathers, the illustrious martyrs and reformers ; still keeping before us that apostolic maxim—to follow them only so far as they follow Christ.’

(3.) As we are to follow good examples, so should we be careful to keep good company.

‘Feed thy kids among the tents of these shepherds.’

The spouse is here considered as a shepherdess, and directed, in the absence of the ‘chief shepherd,’ to associate with his companions ; that is, in the spiritual sense, to attend and accompany with those faithful ministers, who, as under shepherds of our Lord, teach the same truths, and walk in the same precepts. Nothing is more important either to our character or morals than keeping with wise and good company ; for ‘he that walketh with wise men shall be wise ; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.’ In morals this is universally admitted, for we have adopted the scripture proverb as our own, that ‘evil communications corrupt good manners :’ and no less true is it, that to associate with men of loose and sceptical principles is the way to grow first indifferent, and then adverse to the truth.

But the subject leads us naturally to add a remark on the importance of attending a gospel ministry, where we possibly can, in preference to erroneous, or merely moral teachers. It is very true that morality is inseparable from the gospel, but it is equally true that it is not the gospel itself. They should be distinguished, though not divided. We have no reason to expect Christ’s presence, but where his gospel is,

SECTION II.

Chap. I. Ver. 9—11.

Bridegroom. To the horse in Pharaoh's chariots
 Have I compared thee, my consort :
 Thy cheeks are comely with rows,
 Thy neck with [ornamental] chains.
Virgins. Rows of gold will we make for thee,
 With studs of silver.

HERE I think the spouse, attended by the virgins, goes into the garden of the palace, and there meets with her beloved, who compares her to the horses, or perhaps some favourite mare, in her father's chariot. This appears a very coarse compliment to a mere English reader, arising from the difference of our manners : but the horse is an animal of very high estimation in the east. The Arabians are extravagantly fond of their horses¹, and caress them as if they were their children, of which Mr. HARMER gives an extraordinary instance². The horses of Egypt are so remarkable for stateliness and beauty as to be sent as presents of great value to the Sublime Porte³, and it appears from sacred history, that they were in no less esteem formerly among the kings of

¹ This folly is not peculiar to the east. Julius Cæsar placed a marble effigy of his horse in the temple. Nero dressed his horse as a senator. Caligula would have made his horse consul; he invited his horse to supper, and himself waited on him.

² On Sol. Song, p. 174.

³ Maillet in ib.

Syria, and of the Hittites, as well as Solomon himself, who bought his horses at 150 shekels which (at Dean Prideaux's calculation of 3s. the shekel) is 22*l.* 10s. each, a very considerable price at which to purchase 12,000 horses together¹ ! The qualities which form the beauty of these horses, are tallness, proportionable corpulency, and stateliness of manner ; the same qualities which they admire in their women ; particularly *corpulency*, which is known to be one of the most esteemed characters of beauty in the east². Upon this principle is founded the compliment of Solomon ; and it is remarkable that the elegant Theocritus, in his epithalamium for the celebrated Queen *Helen*, whom he describes as ' plump and large³, ' uses exactly the same image, comparing her to ' the horse in the chariots ' of Thessaly⁴. ' And the similarity of the com-

¹ The fame of Solomon's horses is still preserved in Arabia, and the horses called *Kochlani*, whose pedigree is as carefully preserved as that of the first nobility, are said to be derived from Solomon's studs. The chief excellence of these horses is their strength, courage and swiftness. Niebuhr's Travels, vol. II. p. 301.

² We find in the Travels of *Egmont* and *Heyman*, (vol. I. p. 93.) that *corpulency* is in high esteem, especially among the Turks, and that the *supreme beauty* in all these parts is a large fat body, and prominent breasts.—*Niebuhr* says, ' As plumpness is thought a *beauty* in the east, the women, ' in order to obtain this beauty, swallow, every morning ' and every evening, three of these insects (a species of ' *Tenebriones*) fried in butter.' Travels, vol. II. p. 339. Edinb. edition, 1792.

³ Πειρη—μεγαλη.

⁴ 'Hάγματι Θεσσαλος ἵππος. Idyl, xviii. ver. 29. The ingenious editor of the new edition of *Calmet's Dictionary* is

pliment is so striking, as to persuade many of the learned that the Greek poet must have seen the Septuagint version of this book. Plato, however, and Horace, have both employed the same image, and it is observable that the Greek name for a horse is admitted into the composition of a great number of Greek names of women, as Hippe, Hippodamia, Mercippe, Alcippe, and many others.

The easterns, so highly valuing their horses, spare no expence to ornament them with the most costly trappings of gold, enriched with pearls and precious stones: and it is very observable that the Arabian and Turkish ladies decorate themselves in a very similar manner, wearing *rows* of pearls or precious stones round the head-dress and descending over their cheeks: gold chains also upon their necks and bosoms. This agrees very exactly to the ornaments here mentioned,

dissatisfied with this comparison, because, though it might be adopted by 'Theocritus, as a writer of *rustic* poetry,' yet he conceives it too inelegant for a 'royal Jewish bride-groom:—he proposes therefore to render the text, 'To a company of horses among the riders of Pharaoh;' but then, by an unwarrantable figure, he converts these horses into men, and reads, 'to an officer commanding a company of Pharaoh's cavalry:' i. e. to an officer of dragoons on horseback:—'noble as his horses, and graceful as his riders.' This, beside appearing to me extremely forced and laboured, only changes the chariot-horse of Pharaoh into the war-horse of a dragoon, which I should hardly suppose more delicate; while the addition of the rider to his horse confuses and degrades the imagery. Besides, the Hebrews distinguished between Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and horsemen. *Exod. xiv. 23.*—See Calmet, *Frag. No. CIVIL. p. 147.*

and which have a double reference to the dress of the ladies and of horses.

When the virgins promise to make new ornaments for the spouse, it is commonly understood as the promise of a new dress ; but I suspect they have a farther meaning,—namely, to celebrate her praise in *verses* to her honour, which, in the language of the Arabian poets, are compared to *pearls strung in rows*¹. Nor is this foreign to the stile of the Hebrew, since several of the psalms are called jewels of gold² ; and Solomon compares words fitly spoken, by which I understand a well-formed parable or verse; to citrons of gold

¹ The ancient Arabian poems were of two sorts; [vid. Sale's Prelim. Disc. to the Koran] the one they compared to *loose* pearls, and the other to pearls *strung*. In the former the sentences or verses were without connexion; and their beauty arose from the elegance of the expression, and the acuteness of the sentiment. The moral doctrines of the Persians are generally comprehended in such independent proverbial apophthegms, formed into verse. In this respect they bear a considerable resemblance to the proverbs of Solomon; a great part of which book consists of unconnected poetry, like the poetry of the Arabians. Blair's Lectures, vol. III. Lect. XXXVIII. —It may be remarked that *Hafiz* seems to point out a third species of poetic composition when he compares his lyric compositions to 'pearls strung at random,' on account of the freedom of his measures. See *Hindley's Persian Lyrics*, p. 10.—So the author of *Bahur Danush* says, 'Though every single hair of mine were a tongue, I could not *string the pearls* of thy merited thanksgiving.' Mr. Scott, the translator, considers this as an allusion to the beads (or rosaries) of the Mahometans, but query.

² See the titles of Psalms xvi. lvi. &c. in the margin.

in basket-work of silver¹. So Solomon himself compares the maxims of wisdom to ‘an ornament of grace,’ (or graceful ornament) for the head, and chains about the neck² ! which images perfectly correspond with those before us.

When the church is compared to a *horse*, a mare, or a company of horses³, we may remark,

1. That we are often sent in the Scriptures, to learn wisdom and virtue from the brute creation. ‘Go to the ant, thou sluggard!’ is the pointed reproof of SOLOMON. ISAIAH reproves Israel in comparing them to the ox and to the ass :

‘The ox knoweth his owner,
‘And the ass his master’s crib :’
‘But my people doth not know,
‘Israel doth not consider.’

2. The virtues, or admirable qualities of the *horse* are activity, strength, and courage. From

¹ Prov. xxv. 11. This differs materially from our version: the Hebrew is *a word spoken upon its wheels*, which is, I suppose, an allusion to the pottery, and means that a good parable (the Hebrew expression for poetry and metaphor) is artificially framed and moulded like the potter’s vessel on the wheel. On the word *citrons*, see note on chap. ii. 3. of this book: and the word by our translators rendered *pictures*, is admitted to mean net or basket-work.

² Prov. i. 9.

³ The word (סָפָרָה) is commonly considered as a collective noun, like *horse*, or *cavalry* in English: but several of the antient versions and critics take it for a noun feminine singular, with the pronominal affix, and therefore render it ‘my mare,’ i. e. some admired and favourite mare; but the difference seems not important.

the former this creature is supposed, in Hebrew to receive its name¹; and the latter are finely celebrated in the book of Job :

‘ Hast thou given to the horse strength ?

‘ Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder² ?

There is no doubt but activity, vigour, fortitude, and courage, are moral and Christian virtues; but I forbear enlarging, that I may not run into the common error. We have observed that the comparison is here made chiefly with respect to the corpulency of the horse when *well-fed*; and it is remarkable that this circumstance is chiefly alluded to when the animal is metaphorically introduced in scripture. So JEREMIAH compares Israel to ‘ *well fed horses*³,’ because they were ‘ fed to the full’ with the blessings of divine providence, and the means of grace, which David calls the *fatness of God’s house*: analogous to which is the state of the Christian church in times of outward prosperity, when the means of grace abound, and the profession of christianity is unawed and uninterrupted by oppression or persecution. ‘ Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.’

But the most striking text to our purpose is in the prophet ZECHARIAH, where the LORD

¹ *Sus* [סוס] probably from *Shesh* [שש] to be active, sprightly, &c. for which reason the Persians, and some other nations, used to sacrifice horses to the sun. See Parkhurst in סס.

² Job xxxix. 19, &c.

³ Jer. v. 7, 8.

of Hosts expressly calls the house of Judah ‘ his ‘ GOODLY HORSE in the day of battle ;’ where is, I conceive, a double allusion (as in Solomon) both to the horse and its ornaments,—the horse well-fed, mettled, bold, courageous, and richly caparisoned, as the ‘ horse’ of a commander in chief ‘ in the day of battle’.

When the *ornaments*, whether of the women or horses, are here mentioned, we may recollect the apostolic exhortation, particularly to the fair sex ; ‘ Whose adorning’ (says St. PETER) ‘ let it ‘ not be that outward adorning, of plaiting the ‘ hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of ‘ [rich] apparel : but let it be the hidden man of ‘ the heart, in that which is not corruptible, [even ‘ the ornament] of a meek and quiet spirit, which ‘ is, in the sight of God, of great price. For after this manner, in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves.’ In similar language the apostle PAUL exhorts ‘ that women adorn themselves in modest ‘ apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety ; not ‘ with broidered (or plaited) hair, or gold, or ‘ pearls, or costly array ; but (which becometh ‘ women professing godliness,) with good ‘ WORKS.’

But more particularly I would observe, 1. That the graces of the Spirit (which are the same

¹ Zach. x. 3. There is a peculiarity in the original of this text. *Judah* [יְהוּדָה] signifies praise, *glory*, &c. and in allusion to this root, Judah is-called a *glorious*, or a *gorgeous* horse, by a word (דָּוִד) nearly related to that root. See Park. in דָּוִד and יְהוּדָה.

as the moral virtues arising from evangelical principles, and wrought by the Holy Ghost—the graces of the Spirit) are recommended to us as jewels, pearls, and ornaments of gold or precious stones, as in the scriptures already cited.

Sometimes the precepts of divine truth and wisdom are thus represented. So SOLOMON, speaking of *wisdom*—that ‘wisdom which is from ‘above’—says,

‘She is more precious than rubies,
‘And all the things which thou canst desire [are] not to
‘be compared unto her¹.’

Speaking of her precepts, he says,

‘They shall be life unto thy soul,
‘And grace unto thy neck².
‘They shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head,
‘And chains about thy neck³.

2. That these graces, or virtues, are connected like the links of a chain. Say, that the Christian virtues are pearls, or precious stones, then grace is that ‘golden thread’ on which they are strung; this may also be referred to the blessings of the gospel, which all depend upon the grace of God. Thus the apostle enumerates the former—‘Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue
‘knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and
‘to temperance patience; and to patience godli-
‘ness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and

¹ Prov. iii. 15.
Prov. i. 9.

² Prov. iii. 22.

‘ to brotherly kindness charity¹.’ The like remarks may be applied to the rich and various blessings of the covenant of grace and redemption : thus the apostle links them : ‘ Whom he did fore-know he also did predestinate ; whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified².’

Lastly, we may apply this to the praises or encomiums bestowed upon the church ; and it may lead us to observe that, however the irreligious world may despise or deride the character of the true believer, those best acquainted with it will commend and admire. So we have often seen that candid minds, and those open to conviction, have admired and commended the virtues and graces, which they were little disposed to imitate. ‘ See how these Christians love,’ was the language of admiring heathens.—The virgins that attend the church *praise* her.

Ver. 12—14.

Spouse. While the king is in his circle [of friends]
 My spikenard shall yield its odour.
 A bundle of myrrh, is my beloved unto me,
 [Which] shall remain continually in my bosom.
 A cluster of cypress, is my beloved unto me,
 [Such as] in the vineyards of En-gedi.

This paragraph presents us with a different set of images. The king is supposed to be in the circle of his friends at the marriage feast ;

¹ 1 Pet. i. 5.

² Rom. viii. 29, 30.

and the spouse promises in allusion to eastern manners, to entertain him with the most choice perfumes¹: but the language is highly metaphorical. She had before compared his name to liquid perfume, and I conceive her meaning to be, that she would extol him before the company, and that her praises should perfume his character, equal to the fragrancy of ointments, poured out, or of spices burnt before him.

In this view the allegory admits of an easy and beautiful application. The Redeemer is (or at least ought to be) at all times the object of the believer's admiration and gratitude. We should praise him in contemplating the works of nature and of providence—we should praise him in all the ordinances of his house, but most eminently at his table, 'when he sitteth in the circle of his 'friends.' Then should our hearts burn with holy gratitude; then should our lips celebrate his love, and our graces exhale like the perfume of spikenard.

¹ On nuptial occasions, and at all royal and noble feasts, the eastern nations are very profuse in their use of perfumes. Some instances occur in the history of our Lord himself in the New Testament. See Mark xiv. 3. John xii. 3.

Of the true spikenard of the antients there have been some disputes. Three dissertations on it may be found in the *Asiatic Researches*. [See vol. II. 405. IV. 418.] Dr. Roxburgh calls it *Valeriana jatamansi*. He had the living plants growing in baskets, and in each basket were about thirty or forty hairy spike-like bodies, more justly compared to the tails of ermine or small weasels. They could not be brought to flower out of its native soil—Bootan. It is used both for perfume and medicine.

' While at the table sits the king,
 ' He loves to see us smile and sing :
 ' Our graces are our best perfume,
 ' And breathe like spikenard round the room¹.

The words may, however, be extended to the whole of the communion subsisting between the Lord and his people, in acts of social worship. ' The prayers of saints' are in the New Testament compared to ' incense ;' and believers, from their being permitted at all times to offer these, are considered as ' priests' whose office it is to offer incense ' unto God². '

Beside sprinkling and burning perfumes, the easterns frequently use bunches of odoriferous plants as we do nosegays, and sometimes wear little bags or bottles of perfume in their bosoms³ : both which circumstances are alluded to in the next verses.

By a *bundle*, bag, or bottle of myrrh, I understand a small vessel filled with liquid myrrh, or that precious *stacte* which exudes from the tree of its own accord, and was probably worn in the bosom to exhilarate the spirits. By the cypress here mentioned is supposed to be intended the *benna* (or *hinna*) a plant in very high esteem with the Arabians, and other eastern nations. Dr. *Shaw* says, ' This beautiful and odoriferous plant, ' if it is not annually cut and kept very low, grows ' ten or twelve feet high, putting out its little

¹ *Watts*, Hymn lxvi. B. I.

² Rev. v. 18.

³ See *Harmer* on Sol. Song, p. 212. &c.

‘ flowers in clusters which yield a most grateful
‘ smell like camphire’.¹

It was at the island Hinzuan or Johuna, that Sir W. JONES first saw the hinna, which he describes as a very elegant shrub, about six feet high before it was in flower. On bruizing some of the leaves, moistened with water, and applying it to the nails and tips of the fingers, they were in a short time changed to an orange scarlet². *Sonnini* describes this plant as of a sweet smell, and commonly worn by women in their bosoms³.

From this plant being said to grow ‘ in the
‘ vineyards of En-gedi,’ we may remark, that the Hebrews did not restrict the term *vineyards* to ground devoted to the culture of vines, but included in it every kind of plantation for the culture of curious and exotic plants⁴. The sentiment expressed under both these images is the same, and amounts I conceive to this; ‘ That
‘ the sense and recollection of her beloved’s affection was to her pleasant, reviving, and animating, like the choicest perfumes even worn
‘ continually in the bosom’.⁵

Such is the Lord Jesus Christ to his church,

¹ Travels, p. 113, 114. 2d. edit.

² Works, vol. I. p. 493.

³ Hunter’s Trans. vol. I. p. 273.

⁴ See *Calmet’s Dict.* also *Harmer* on Sol. Song, p. 34.

⁵ The original word for *remain* signifies ‘ to stay, abide, remain,’ and is by no means confined to the night. *Bate, Parkhurst, Harmer.*

and to the individual believers of which it is composed.

1. His love is precious like myrrh. Images of this kind make but weak impressions on the imagination of an European ; but to see the manner in which an Asiatic enjoys perfumes would suggest a strong idea of the rapturous manner in which St. Paul expresses his sense of redeeming love : ‘ O the height and depth, the length and ‘ breadth of the love of Christ !’

2. We should endeavour to preserve this sense of the love of Christ in our hearts—wear it in our bosoms. So saith the apostle JUDE : ‘ Keep ‘ yourselves in the love of God ; looking for the ‘ mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal ‘ life’.’ The continual recollection of the love of Christ to us, is the most certain way to keep alive our affection to him.

3. The Jews have a remark on this text, which, though caballistical enough, may be worth repeating. They observe, in their mystical way, that the original word for cypress signifies also an atonement ; and that the two words, a cluster of cypress, may with a slight variation be changed into ‘ the man who propitiates all things,’ and point strongly to the Messiah, and his death and sacrifice. Dr. Watts beautifully alludes to this idea.

‘ As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
‘ Such is a dying Christ to me ;
‘ And while he makes my soul his guest,
‘ Thy bosom, Lord ! shall be my rest.’

SECTION III.

Ch. I. ver. 15—17.

Bridegroom. Behold, thou art beautiful, my consort :
Behold, thou art beautiful ! thine eyes are doves :

Spouse. Behold, thou art beautiful, my beloved ; yea
pleasant :
Yea verdant is our carpet.

Bridegroom. Cedars are the roof of our house,
And the Brutine trees our rafters.

Dr. KENNICOTT makes a division here, with a change of scene ; and, though I confess myself rather doubtful, I have followed his example. If we continue the scene, we must consider this verse as an answer to the affectionate expressions of the spouse in the preceding paragraph ; commending her beauty, and, in particular her *eyes*, as the faithful index of her heart. The general current of critics and interpreters run a parallel between her eyes and the eyes of doves, and it is certain that there is something very beautiful and striking in the eyes of the carrier pigeon, which is the true Assyrian dove : but having considered the construction of the original, and the manner in which the same image is afterwards introduced, with the nature of the parabolic imagery, I am compelled to yield to the opinion of Dr. HODGSON¹, that the eyes are compared, not to the eyes of doves, but to doves themselves : for, as he observes, when it is afterwards said, ‘ her eyes are *fishpools*,’ it must be taken in this manner ; and so elsewhere her hair and teeth

¹ In loc.

are compared to goats and sheep, and not merely to the hair of goats and the teeth of sheep, as we shall have farther occasion to observe¹. The general ideas of the metaphor are purity, affection, and simplicity of understanding. Let us apply these figures.

1. The eye is a natural and scriptural image of the understanding—whence the expression of ‘the eyes of the understanding.’ And on these subjects we cannot avoid recollecting the maxim of our Lord, to ‘be wise as serpents and harmless as doves;’ and the apostle James’s character of divine wisdom, as first pure, and then peaceable, easy to be entreated.

2. Chaste affection is probably the principal idea of the writer. Doves were among the ancients sacred to love. Venus had her car drawn by them. The eye is the seat of love, as the dove is the emblem of it². This may afford us a hint upon the nature of genuine love to Christ. Such is the depravity of our nature, and the imperfection of our holy things, that we are very apt to mix carnality with our best affections, and to

¹ I am the more satisfied with this interpretation, from observing the following image in a Persian poet, (which should be compared also with ch. v. 12.) The bard I allude to says, the eyes of his mistress ‘played like a pair of water-birds with azure plumage, that sport near a full-blown lotos on a pool, in the season of dew.’ Sir W. Jones’s Works, vol. I.

² One of our own poets, in an expression similar to that I have just cited from an eastern bard, says, ‘Love in her eyes sits playing;’ but in Solomon the image is sanctified; the cupid is exchanged for a dove, and wantonness for purity.

offer to our God a sacrifice with profane fire. This appears in several ways ; but chiefly,

1. When we entertain low and mean ideas of the divine character ; when we think him ‘ such ‘ another as ourselves : ’ an error which we are the more exposed to from the kind and condescending characters he has assumed : but to prevent this we should accustom ourselves to contemplate the divine and human glories of our Lord Jesus in their union. He is both a *lion* and a *lamb* : ‘ the root and offspring of David.’ Of the seed of Abraham and of David, according to the flesh ; but, in his superior and divine character, ‘ over all, God blessed for ever ! ’

(2.) We should avoid all those gross and carnal expressions, which degrade and deprave devotion. Jesus Christ is indeed *dear*, *infinitely* dear, to all his people ; yet terms of endearment borrowed from the objects of our carnal love have a tendency to degrade him, whom it is our first desire to honour. They that treat him but as the babe of Bethlehem still, should remember that he is not always a child : but that he has attained maturity, and taken possession of his throne.

(3.) The dove was a sacred emblem, not only with the Hebrews, but with the Syrians, who worshipped the Deity under this form, and bore this image in their colours. It has been thought also that they decorated their sacred doves, covering ‘ their wings ’ with ornaments of ‘ silver,

‘and their feathers with yellow gold¹.’ Though I rather suppose this passage alludes to the splendid images of this bird, wrought in gold and silver upon their standards.—Our love to Christ should be always dignified with devotion; it should be religious as well as pure. A certain writer mentions a young lady of rank in a foreign monastery, who from her constant devotion to a crucifix, ‘conceived a passionate tenderness for ‘the object’ of her worship;’ and he adds, that the images of all the saints have their *inamoratos*². I fear this folly is not wholly confined to catholics. When we essentially mistake the character of the Redeemer, we worship an idol of our own imagination, rather than the true Christ of God.

In the following verses the bride returns the compliment to her beloved, and commences an amiable altercation, as Dr. Doderlein understands it, respecting the pleasures and advantages of a town and country life.

Her commendation of the beloved is expressed in two terms—He is *beautiful*, and *pleasant*. The former idea will recur with much enlargement in the description of his person: the latter term merits some observation here.

The term *pleasant*³, personally applied, in the scriptures constantly intends the pleasures and

¹ Ps. lxxviii. See Harmer's Observations.

² Nott's Odes of Hafiz, p. 25, note.

³ נעים from נעם ‘pleasant, sweet, agreeable.’ The term is applied to a variety of objects which determine its sense; as to a country, an instrument of music, or to speech: but, personally applied, it intimates the felicity of friendship and union of heart.

the agreeable harmony of friendship. So the Psalmist tells us, ' it is *pleasant* for brethren to dwell together in unity¹. ' Saul and Jonathan were ' pleasant in their lives² ; that is, harmonious and agreeable ; and the latter was ' very pleasant' also to David ; that is, he was emphatically his *friend*, which very term the spouse applies to her beloved in this song.—We may here remark by the way, that great part of the felicity of the matrimonial state depends on friendship. Where the husband considers the wife only as the instrument of his pleasures, or an object of his convenience, it can only be expected that she should regard him as a master and a tyrant. But a union of interests, a reciprocity of affection, and an interchange of kind offices, engender friendship, and friendship completes and crowns the happiness of the nuptial state.

The Lord Jesus is eminently the church's friend, and she is his friend—companion—*consort*³. Thus he addressed his own disciples—' Henceforth I call you not servants—but friends⁴ ! ' And this term implies both privileges and duties.

1. It is the privilege of friends to be intrusted with each other's secrets. ' The servant knoweth not what his Lord doth : but I have called

¹ Ps. cxxxiii. 1.

² 2 Sam. i. 23, 26.

³ The Hebrew name for a friend, companion, or neighbour, [רֵעַ] is properly a *messmate*, whence [רֵעִית] a female companion, a consort. See Parkhurst.

⁴ John xv. 15.

‘you friends,’ saith our Redeemer; ‘for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.’ He ‘revealeth himself unto them as he doth not unto the world;’ for ‘the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant’.¹ So Abraham was the friend of God: the Lord therefore would not destroy Sodom till he had acquainted him. ‘Shall I do this, and not let Abraham know?’

On the other hand, the Lord’s people have their secrets, which they confide to his ear. They have their secret sins to confess, their secret sorrows to relate, and their secret comforts to enjoy. They ‘pray in secret’ to him that ‘heareth in secret; and they have ‘bread to eat in ‘secret’ which the world knows nothing of.

2. The friendship here referred to arises, in a great measure, from a unity of ideas, interests, and designs. ‘In thy light shall we see light,’ saith the Psalmist. By viewing objects in the same light with God, we become reconciled to all his will, and assimilated gradually unto his image. By viewing sin in God’s light, we see it to be exceeding sinful—by viewing holiness in God’s light, we discover it to be altogether amiable—by viewing afflictions in God’s light, we discern them to be working together for our good.—Unity of ideas creates unity of *interest*. If we

¹ Ps. xxv.

see objects in the same light with God, we see our interests to be the same. Men's interests, as individuals, are as various as their faces; but the believer's best interests are those of Christ and his cause. The promotion of holiness, and the advancement of vital christianity, are the believer's interest, and he prefers them to his 'chief joy.' Sectaries have all their interests—the interests of parties and denominations; but in proportion as we drink into the spirit of Christ, we shall endeavour to submit our peculiar views and interests to that common one of Christ and his church; and to say, with a pious versifier,

' Let names, and sects, and parties fall,
' And Jesus Christ be all in all !

We are too apt to measure Christ's interest by ours, and suppose that his cause must be best promoted in the advancement of our party : but the contrary ought, and as grace prevails, will be our conduct. Let our party die and be forgotten, if so be the general interests of Christ may thereby be promoted.—In fine, if we expect Christ to make our interest his, let us make his interest ours.

Unity of interest implies unity of *design*. It is the grand design of God to promote holiness. Be this our grand object, both as it respects ourselves and others.

Friendship has its *duties* as well as privileges, 'Ye are my friends,' saith our Lord, 'if ye do whatsoever I command you : ' and it is vain and hypocritical to assume this character without a disposition to perform its obligations : ' A man

‘ that hath friends must shew himself friendly :
 ‘ and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a
 ‘ brother.’

But our subject would rather lead us to commend the *pleasures* of friendship: Christ is a *pleasant* friend.—His *words* are pleasant; and ‘ pleasant words are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.’—His *countenance* is pleasant: ‘ it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun;’ much more is it to behold the sun of righteousness. ‘ In the light of the king’s countenance is life’, says Solomon. ‘ Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us!’—His *company* is pleasant: ‘ one day in his courts is better than a thousand:’—‘ His riches perish with him,’ says an old writer, ‘ who prefers all the riches and pleasures of the world to one hour’s communion with Jesus Christ.’

The spouse adds—“ Yea verdant is our carpet.” The reader is to recollect that the present scene is supposed to be the garden of the palace. The eastern gardens are laid out upon an extensive scale, including pleasure-grounds and plantations of various descriptions. The present spot appears to have been a plat or lawn, ‘ verdant’ as ‘ a carpet.’ The word which I have rendered *verdant*, does not refer *primarily* to colour, but to colour only as it is the *effect* of vigorous and lively vegetation². The other term, rendered *carpet*,

¹ Prov. xvi. 15.

² רעננה green, from רעץ to flourish vigorously, as a plant. Parkhurst.

is in the common version *bed*; nor is the difference so great as may appear to a mere English reader; since the eastern beds are usually mats, mattresses, or *carpets* spread upon the *duan*, a part of the room elevated above the rest. To these a green plat or lawn would very aptly correspond, and might be very properly stiled ‘a verdant carpet;’ just as an eastern poet speaks of ‘the carpet of the garden’ bespangled with gold¹.

But what is the design of this expression? Mr. HARMER, who supposes this scene to be at some distance from Jerusalem, understands the words as expressing a modest wish to delay the consummation of the marriage by protracting her journey; but we suppose that period to be past; and, if not, such an interpretation appears to me unnatural and inconsistent in a bride so much flattered with her new connexion, and so enamoured of her royal bridegroom.

Dr. DODERLEIN considers the passage as the commendation of a rural life in preference to a residence in the metropolis; while, in the next verse, the bridegroom describes the splendour of a palace, of which the meanest parts were formed of cedars, and of fir, or cypress².

¹ *Ensoof Zooleika*, appended to White’s Institutes of Tamur.

² If *Kiroth*, קרוֹת, mean *beams*, the corresponding word should be *rafters*, which the original is allowed to bear. *Rahithe*, רוֹחֵט, is supposed to be from the Chaldee רוֹחֵט, *currere*, to run. [*Buxtorf*.] In the first instance it evidently means *canals* in which water *runs* for cattle, Gen. xxx. 38, 41.

But a learned and ingenious friend, who has favoured this version with his perusal, harmonizes the verses thus: He supposes that, while a verdant lawn, perhaps glowing with the intermixture of the most beautiful flowers, forms their carpet, they were seated in an alcove, artificially formed by the intervening branches of the cedar and the fir-tree, to shelter them from the scorching sunbeams. Thus the cedars and the firs might be poetically called the beams and rafters of their *choisk*, summer-house, or arbour.—This I confess appears to me far the most beautiful and elegant idea, and the moral or spiritual improve-

2dly, It may here mean *rafters*, being so used both in the *Misnah* and in the *Midrash* (as Dr. Gill observes from *R. Sol. Jarchi*) because perhaps rafters are so laid as to form a resemblance of canals in their interstices; and 3d, in another part of this song, (chap. vii. 5.) it is used for *galleries*, *ambulacra* (*Buxtorf*) which have also an evident resemblance to the primary meaning of the word.

It must be confessed our common printed copies here read *רהיטנו*: but many MSS. and additions read *רהיטנו*. Eight MSS. one edition, all the ancient versions, and a Greek MS. in the library of St. Mark, at Venice, read the word plural, either *רהיטנו* or *רהיטנו*. [Vid. *Doderlein Scholia* in V. T. p. 193; *Notæ Crit.* in Cant. in *Repert. Bibl. et Or.* t. vii. p. 224. et *Paulus Repert. Or.* t. xvii. p. 138.] *Buxtorf*, though he writes *רהיטנו*, places it under the root *רחט*, and says, 'Scribitur cum *ח*, sed juxta Masor. legitur per *ח*.'

There is another doubtful word in this verse. *ברזיתים*, according to *Ainsworth*, are brutine trees, (called by *Pliny* 'bruta') resembling the cypress, with whitish branches, and of an odoriferous scent. So the LXX. *Κυπαρισσοι*, and Vulg. *cypressina*, cypress trees. But others suspect that, by the exchange of a single letter, this is used for *ברזשים*, (which indeed is the reading of several MSS. both in *Kenicott* and *De Rossi*) commonly rendered *firs*.

ment will be founded on this simple thought—that wherever the presence of Christ is, there is every object dear and delightful to a believer. Wherever he treads, flowers of celestial beauty spring around his feet; wherever he rests, trees of immortal verdure bloom around his head.

But my friend may be mistaken; and if my reader approve the more general idea, of a contrast between the verses, as marking the difference between a rural choise and a royal palace, I am not willing to impede his spiritual improvement by withholding a farther remark on this supposition; namely, that though the Lord doth often vouchsafe to his people much happiness and pleasure in retirement, and in private communion, yet his special presence and blessing are to be sought for in his public ordinances, in his holy temple: for ‘the beams of his house are cedar, and his rafters are of fir.’

‘No beams of cedar or of fir
 ‘Can with thy courts on earth compare;
 ‘And here we wait until thy love
 ‘Raise us to nobler seats above.’

WATTS.

The TARGUM applies this to the third temple, which the Jews expect to ‘be built in the days of the king Messiah, whose beams will be of the cedars of the garden of Eden, and whose rafters will be of brutine, fir, and box.’ Apply this to the Christian church, the true temple of Messiah, and it may lead us to remark, that this is composed of the most valuable and durable

materials : not rotten hypocrites or painted professors ; but sound and savory believers.

I may add, once more, that we are too apt to rest in present attainments and present enjoyments in religion, without endeavouring to make a progress. We are, like PETER, for building tabernacles, and saying, ‘ It is good for us to be ‘ here,’ when it is better for us to go forward in our journey. For whatever pleasures, or happiness, we may find in our present attainments and privileges, the Lord hath better and richer blessings in reserve for us. We may say with DAVID, ‘ the lines have fallen to us,’ (that is, our lot hath been marked out) ‘ in pleasant places,’ or with Solomon, ‘ verdant is our carpet ;’ but what are present enjoyments to what God is capable of bestowing ? What are temporal and transitory blessings to those which are eternal ? And what are the tents and tabernacles in which he dwells on earth to his palace in the heavens ?

Ch. II. Ver. 1—3.

Spouse. I am a rose of Sharon ;
A lily of the vallies.

Bridegroom. As a lily among thorns,
So is my consort among the daughters.

Spouse. As the citron-tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my beloved among the sons.
In his shade I delighted and sat down,
And his fruit was sweet unto my taste.

If I mistake not, the chapters should not have been separated here, because the scene and conversation are continued. The spouse, perhaps,

with the most beautiful productions of the royal garden in her view, ventures to compare herself, not with them, but with the more humble natives of the fields¹ and vallies². Here I conceive may be an allusion to her conversation with the virgins in the former chapter; and the thought might be naturally suggested by the assemblage of beauty collected at the royal nuptials. ‘I am a
 ‘rose,’ says she, ‘and am now transplanted into
 ‘the royal garden; but I am not a native of this
 ‘soil. I was not educated in a palace; though I
 ‘was born there. My mother’s sons were angry
 ‘with me, they made me a keeper of the vine-
 ‘yards, and I became an inhabitant of the fields:
 ‘there I should have bloomed and died,
 ‘unnoticed and unadmired, had not providence opened a way for my removal hither.’

That these are the words of the spouse, ra-

¹ *Sharon* was a fertile plain, famous for its pastures, as appears from 1 Chron. xxvii. 29. A part, at least, of this district, in which a town of the same name was situated (1 Chron. v. 16) is said in the Mishnah (title *Sota*) to have been of a peculiarly dry and sandy soil, which is the best adapted for the growth of roses; and it is probable that they were here cultivated for their use in perfumes, which form an important article of commerce in the east. The LXX read ‘a rose of the field,’ which gives the same general idea, though not so accurate.

² By a ‘lily of the vallies’ we are not to understand the humble flower generally so called with us, the *lilium convallium*; but the nobler flower which ornaments our gardens, and which in Palestine grows wild in the fields, and especially in the vallies, among the corn. ‘See the lilies of the field, how they grow:—yet Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.’ Matt. vi. 28, 29.

ther than of the bridegroom, I infer, not so much from the words, 'rose and lily,' being of feminine termination; but chiefly from the current of the dialogue, in which they seem naturally to belong to the spouse, and the preceding and following verses to the beloved. And this I find is 'the general opinion of the Jewish doctors,' as well as of some very respectable Christian interpreters¹.

Among the Greeks the *rose* was called the plant of love, and considered as sacred to Venus: and they suppose, if Jupiter were to set a king over the flowers, it would be this. The easterns, both in ancient and modern times, are no less fond of images derived from the same source. The great *MOGUL*, in a letter to our king James I. compliments him by comparing him to this flower: and most of the eastern poets celebrate its charms. The original word here used for the rose is supposed in its derivation to signify the shadowing plant; and we read of rose-trees of great extent and prodigious size; but I rather incline to the opinion, that it strictly means the rose-bud, or shadowed rose, that is, shaded with the calyx².

¹ Viz. Ainsworth, Brightman, Lyra, Vatablus, Cocceius, Michaelis, Dr. Percy, Mr. Harmer, &c.

² See *Parkhurst* in חֲבַעֲלָה, who observes that *Aquila* renders this word in the only two places in which it occurs, καλυπσις and καλυξ, which properly signify a *rose half blown*. And it is worthy of remark, that this appears to be a very favourite image with the eastern poets. So the Persian author of *Bahur Danush*, translated by Mr. Scott, represents

PLINY reckons the *lily* the next plant in excellency to the rose, and the gay ANACREON compares Venus to this flower. In the east, as with us, it is the emblem of purity and moral excellence. So the Persian poet SADI compares an amiable youth to 'the white lily in a bed of narcissuses;' because he surpassed 'all the young shepherds in piety, goodness, and vigilance.'

These hints are sufficient to point out the general design of the emblems; let us now apply them to their proper object in the allegory.

1. The church compares herself to the *rose* and the *lily*, as the genuine emblems of love and virtue, innocence and purity; for such are the characters of the church, and, through grace, of the individuals who compose it. This is not, however, their character by nature; for they are wild plants till they are transplanted, and cul-

the rose-bud in love with the nightingale under several points of view: 1. As reserved and coy: 'I said, Why is the rose-bud so reserved? And I heard that it wished to conceal its treasures.' Vol. III. p. 210.

2. As uneasy under the restraints of a single life, and desirous of admitting the addresses of the nightingale: 'Say ye to the rose-bud, be not uneasy at thy confinement; for thou wilt soon be released by the breath of dawn, and the wavings of the zephyrs.' Vol. II. p. 152.

3. As at length bursting with passion to receive the caresses of its favourite bird. 'The rose exposed itself from every opening; rending the vesture of its bud into a thousand fragments.' Vol. I. p. 53.

tivated by grace, which can convert weeds and wild flowers into beautiful and pleasant plants.

2. The church expresses herself with *modesty*¹.—She is a rose, but it is a rose of the field; a lily, but only a lily of the vallies. Not the elegant productions of a royal garden, but the spontaneous growth of the field and valley. Again, the rose to which she compares herself is not the full blown flower, but the bud with its beauties shaded and concealed; the finest emblem in nature of modesty and unassuming excellence.

The lily was a favourite emblem with the Hebrews, and much employed in their carving, embroidery, and other ornamental works; and this I think not without some mystery. The lily was, I suppose, sacred to the light²:—and so to Christ the true immortal light, the sun of righteousness; and this perhaps accounts best for the so frequent use of lily-work in the temple, and in the dresses of the high-priest.

In another respect the church is compared to to this flower, remarkable for growth as well as beauty, and singularly fruitful: Israel shall ‘grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon³.’

¹ So Bp. Percy; but Mr. Harmer interprets it, I conceive very unnaturally, as the language of jealousy and complaint, p. 63.

² See Parkhurst in *ושׁ*. The lotos, which resembles this flower in its distinctive character as a six-leaved flower, was certainly a sacred emblem in Egypt and other parts of the east.

³ Hos. xiv. 5.

The spouse considers herself as a lily *in a valley of lilies*, &c. that is, as one beauty among a multitude ; but the bridegroom, in his reply, places her above competition : she is a lily *among thorns*, and excels the other fair-ones as a lily doth the thorns.

Observe, 1. Christ's church is in his sight, not only supremely excellent, but singularly and only so—a lily among thorns. So believers are the ' salt of the earth—the light of the world—a seed ' to serve the Lord in the midst of a crooked and ' perverse generation.'

2. A lily among thorns has been supposed properly to represent the church in affliction and temptations. So R. SOLOMON JARCHI, ' As the lily ' among thorns, which prick it, yet stands continually in its beauty ; so is my love among the ' daughters, who entice her to follow after them, ' and go a whoring after other gods, but yet continues in her religion'.¹ I confess this sense forced and arbitrary ; yet I mention it because it agrees well with the analogy of scripture ; for the inspired writers frequently speak of afflictions, &c. under the image of thorns ; and it is promised, as one of the felicities of the future state, that ' there ' shall be no more a pricking briar, or a grieving ' thorn.'

The spouse raises her beloved also above

¹ It should seem as if this celebrated rabbin understood the compliment from Solomon to his new spouse, as a reflection upon his other wives, who enticed away his heart to idols, and attempted to entice her, though without success.

competition and comparison, as he had exalted her: and, upon this occasion, she relates the pleasure and delight received in his company and conversation.

The tree to which the bride compares her beloved, is commonly understood to be the *apple* tree; but this has justly been called in question. The CHALDEE paraphrase renders it the *citron* tree, which agrees better to all that is said of it in scripture¹, as well as to the natural history of Judea; since the eastern apples are very indifferent, and their citrons very fine². As much then as the citron tree excels the vulgar trees of the wood³, so much does the beloved all other men.

This image is pursued in the subsequent verse. Having compared her beloved to a tree, she compares the enjoyment of his company to sitting under its shadow, and eating plentifully of its fruit⁴.

¹ It is represented as noble and delightful, Joel i. 12. Gold coloured, Prov. xxv. 11. and very fragrant and refreshing. Cant. vii. 8. ii. 3, 5.—See Harmer's Observations, vol. I. chap. iv. obs. 31.

² Russel's Nat. Hist. of Aleppo, p. 21.

³ A lofty and spreading tree is a favourite image with the best poets: so in *Ossian*: 'I was a lovely tree in thy presence, Oscar, with all my branches round me.' (Battle of Lora.) Compare Ps. cxxviii. 3.

⁴ Entertainments under trees are common in the east. *Egmont* and *Heyman* drank coffee under the orange trees in the garden at Mount Sinai; and Dr. *Pococke* was entertained in a garden at Sidon, under the shade of some apricot trees, and the fruit was shaken upon him. See Harmer on Sol. Song, p. 248.

In our application of these words to the heavenly bridegroom, we may observe,

1. That he is compared to a *tree*. So the God of Israel represents himself in the prophet—
‘I am like a green fir-tree¹,’—which is ever fair and flourishing.

He is compared to a *large* and *shady* tree—
‘in (or under) his shade I delighted and sat down.’ To us this image is not nearly so striking and beautiful as if we resided in the east, where the heat of the sun is more intense, and shade in travelling much less frequent. But he, who is compared to ‘the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,’ may also, no less fitly, be compared to the shadow of a great tree. Jesus Christ shades the believer from the just anger of Deity, and its consequences: and those who fatigue themselves in vain, in seeking salvation at the foot of burning Sinai, may find rest and safety under the shadow of his cross; ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ He shades them from the burning sun of persecution, or public calamity: ‘The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand; the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night².’

He is compared to a *fruitful* tree—‘From me,’ says the Lord to his people Israel—‘From me is thy fruit found³.’ ‘Wisdom is a tree of life’—‘a tree that beareth twelve manner of fruits,’ and has no barren season—always blooming, ever

¹ Hos. xiv. 8.

² Ps. cxxi. 5, 6.

³ Hos. xiv. 8.

bearing : and by the fruit he bears may be understood either, 1. His conversation, which is the ‘fruit of the lips’.¹ ‘A word spoken in due season, how good is it!’—When Jesus Christ was upon earth his words were admired for their sweetness, and authority ; ‘Never man spake like this man!’ Now he is in heaven, he can still ‘speak well :’—he can ‘speak peace to them that are afar off.’ His words are ‘as citrons of gold in baskets of silver.’

2. The fruit of this tree may intend the graces of the Spirit, which are communicated from Christ—the fruits of righteousness and holiness. These are the fruits expected from those ‘trees of righteousness which the Lord hath planted ;’ and of such, he says, ‘from me is thy fruit found.’

Ver. 4—6,

Spouse. He brought me into the house of wine,
And his banner over me was love.
‘Support me with refreshments ;
‘Strew citrons round me ;
‘For I am sick of love.’
His left hand was under my head,
And his right hand embraced me.

In these verses, the imagery is dropped or changed, and the spouse relates more literally the pleasure she had recently enjoyed in the company of her beloved. ‘He brought me into the house of wine.’ The Persian poet HAFEZ uses this expression for an eastern tavern, or house of entertainment ; but Solomon, I think, for a wine

¹ Isa. lvii. 19.

cave, or cool recess, in the royal gardens. Whether it were customary with the Hebrews to display a banner, a flag, or pendant, (as sometimes on our tents and summer houses) on occasions of festivity, I am not confident; but it seems probable from the next words, 'his banner over me' 'was love;' that is, was inscribed with this term, or embroidered with figures expressing the chaste enjoyments and affections of the nuptial state: though some commentators are of opinion the expression only intimates, that the bridegroom conquered merely by the display of his love. In this situation she confesses herself overcome, and requests to be supported with refreshments, and exhilarated with fruits, particularly *citrons*, remarkable, it should seem, for their exhilarating quality.

What are intended by the first term, which I have rendered *refreshments*, the translators have been much at a loss to guess, as may be seen by the variety of versions in the margin. Mr.

¹ אֲשִׁשׁוֹת—In floribus.] In unguentes, (εν μυρροις) LXX. sic Arab.—*Phialis vitreis*, Pagn.—*lagenis istis*, Jun. & Tr. Pisc.—*lagenis*, Merc. sic Mont. Castal. Arab. &c.—sive, *vasis*, Vatab. Munst. sub. *vini*, Vatab. Merc. Arab. sim. Muns. *vini optimi*; ut fieri solet τοις λειποθυμουσι, Grot.—Poli Syn. Crit. in loc.

The English translators agree no better. Cranmer, and the Bishops Bible, term it *cups*; Coverdale and Matthews, *grapes*; the Doway version, *flowers*; our common version is *flaggons*; and Mr. Harmer understands it of the skins of gourds, used as vessels for wine. The LXX and Vulgate use in different places different words, signifying *cakes*, unguents and lees of wine. The word itself, אֲשִׁשׁוֹת, is allowed to be derived from אש fire in a reduplicate form.

The root (רפד) is to *spread* a carpet, to *strew* round, as fruit from a tree.—*Parkhurst*.

PARKHURST (following the derivation of the word from fire) renders it *confectionaries*—things baked or *prepared by fire*: but might he not with equal propriety have referred to some cordials or simple waters distilled by fire? or even to wine in baked earthen vessels?—In this great uncertainty, I have preferred the most general term I could find—*refreshments*. The other member of the sentence, ‘Strew citrons round me,’ is literally rendered, and presents us with the image of a person seated upon a carpet (as is the eastern custom) and surrounded with fruit and other delicacies.

The application of these verses to a chaste and spiritual mind is easy. We need not seek far for what is intended by the *banqueting house*, or wine cave¹. Free and intimate communion with God in holy exercises is a banquet to the soul; and

¹ We have observed in the preliminary essay, (p. 95, &c.) from the highest authorities, that these images are allegorically employed by the Persian poets, particularly *Hafiz*. ‘Accordingly to the mystical vocabularies [or rather commentaries] on *Hafiz*, by *wine* the poet invariably means devotion; by the *breeze*, an illapse of grace; by *perfume*, the hope of the divine favour; by the *tavern* or *banqueting-house*, a retired oratory; by its *keeper*, a sage instructor; by *beauty*, the perfection of the supreme Being; and by *wantonness*, *mirth*, and *inebriety*, religious ardour, and disregard of all terrestrial thoughts and objects.” *Hindley’s Persian Lyrics*, p. 29.

I may add, from another writer, that the most respectable commentators ‘assert the koranic principles of *Hafez*.’ *Feridoun* attempts to prove ‘that even his most luxuriant verses are but so many religious allegories;’ and so prevalent is this opinion that the language of *Hafez* has been stiled among the Mussulmans, *Lessan Gaib*, or the language of mystery. *Nott’s* account of *Hafez*, prefixed to his select odes, p. x.

the place where this is enjoyed, a banqueting house. In this view the temple was such to the pious Jews, where the sacrifices were considered as a feast, and the wine poured out as the wine of a banquet, whereby the heart, both of God and man, was gladdened.

- ‘ How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God !
- ‘ Therefore the children of men put their trust under the
‘ shadow of thy wings.
- ‘ They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy
‘ house ;
- ‘ And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy
‘ pleasures¹.’

The blessings of the gospel are promised under the same image, and the communion with God vouchsafed in his house, is a feast, or banquet, under every dispensation.

- ‘ In this mountain shall the *Lord* of Hosts make unto all
‘ people
- ‘ A feast of fat things ;
- ‘ A feast of wines on the lees ;
- ‘ Of fat things full of marrow ;
- ‘ Of wines on the lees well refined².’

Agreeable to the same imagery, all the provisions of the gospel are represented under the idea of a feast—a marriage feast, at which we know that plenty of wine was always an essential article³.

When the queen of Sheba was brought into the court of Solomon, and saw all his glory, and heard his wisdom, we are told that ‘ there was

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 8.

² Is. xxv. 6.

³ Matt. xxii. 2. See John ii. 3. &c.

‘ no more spirit in her :’ she was overcome with admiration and astonishment. Such is the state of a believer’s mind, favoured with intimate communion with his God, and with eminent discoveries of his glory. Thus it was with David, when he ‘ rejoiced with great joy on occasion of ‘ the people’s offering willingly for the temple ;’ and he said, ‘ Now therefore our God, we thank ‘ thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who ‘ am I, and what is my people, that we should ‘ be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? for ‘ all things come of thee, and of thine own have ‘ we given thee¹.’ And, when he reviewed the divine conduct toward him on another occasion, overwhelmed with gratitude, he exclaimed, “ and “ is this the manner of man, O Lord God² !”

So when at a distance from the house of God and means of grace, with what pleasure does he recollect his former enjoyments, and with what anxiety pant for their return !

‘ O God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee :
 ‘ My soul thirsteth for thee ;
 ‘ My flesh longeth for thee ;
 ‘ In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ;
 ‘ To see thy power and thy glory,
 ‘ So as I have seen thee in the sanctuary :
 ‘ Because thy loving kindness is better than life
 ‘ My lips shall praise thee³.’

To the experience of David we might add that of Isaiah, of Paul, of John the Divine, and others.—Nor is it in scripture only that such

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14.

² Sam. vii. 19.

³ Ps. lxxiii. 1, &c.

sublime expressions of devotion are to be met with: there are several instances, both in the martyrology, and in authentic religious biography. It is enough to mention the names of Fernelon, Boyle, Watts, Col. Gardiner, and Mrs. Rowe; in whose experience we meet with examples of that rapturous devotion which has at times overcome the mortal frame, and led them to say with Paul, in another case—‘ Whether in ‘ the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell— ‘ God knoweth.’

In such a frame of mind we suppose the spouse to have confessed herself *sick*—faint, or wounded with love¹: completely conquered by the display of his tenderness and affection, when his ‘ banner ‘ over her was love:’ which expression is very properly thus expounded by an old writer. ‘ The ‘ banner of our Lord is his love, which he hath ‘ publicly declared to us, that he might draw us ‘ to himself: by which also, when we are come ‘ to him, he retains us with him; and strength- ‘ ens us with the same when we fight against our ‘ spiritual enemies. And that we may always ‘ look upon it, he carries it over us; that is, renders his love most familiar to us. He that knows ‘ not this banner, can be none of his soldier; and ‘ he that deserts it is undone, unless he presently ‘ return to it. So that as the Roman legions had ‘ their several names (the pious, the faithful, &c.) ‘ in like manner this may be called *amoris legio*, ‘ the legion of love².’

¹ Τελωμενην αγαπης, LXX. *Amore languo*. Vulgate.
² *Dalherrus* in Patrick.

In this situation the spouse fell into the arms of her beloved, where she found tenderness, support, relief. His left hand was under her head, and his right hand embraced her. He supported her with cordials, wine and fruits. It is not here necessary to descend to particulars. Whatever be the believer's wants, he may find a rich supply in the gospel, administered by the tender hand of that Saviour, who is ' touched with the feeling ' of our infirmities ;' who knows how to speak ' a word in season' to him that ' is faint or weary;' who giveth ' strong drink unto him that is ready ' to perish; and wine to those that be of heavy ' hearts.'

Verse 7.

Bridegroom. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
Before the antelopes, and before the hinds of
the field,
That ye disturb not, nor awake
This lovely one, until she please.

As this verse, with little variation, occurs in two other places, it may be considered as a kind of chorus; but whether it be spoken in the person of the bridegroom, or the bride, is doubtful. In the other passages, these words appear to be uttered by the spouse, notwithstanding the construction of the original¹ would lead us to refer

¹ Both the noun *Ahabah*, אהבה, *love*, and the verb *Techpatz*, תחפץ, until *she please*, are feminine; and it is remarkable that the term for *love* is here of a different root from that which is applied to the bridegroom, *Dodi*, דודי, *my beloved*, and the same that is given to the spouse in chap. vii. 6. My version is nearly that of *Michaelis* in *Bp. Lowth*, who supposes a mistake in the Masoretic punctuation.

them to the beloved ; but in the present instance the strict grammatical sense seems the most natural. Still, in one respect, the verse may be considered as the language of the spouse, repeating what her beloved had said ; that is, she relates that her Lord embraced her, and while she rested on his bosom, he hushed the virgins her companions, which may be supposed in waiting :— ‘ Disturb not my love until she please.’ In the version, however, I have endeavoured to preserve the ambiguity of the original, as a translator cannot be too faithful.

The other difficulty is kept out of sight in the common version, but there can be no doubt that the original properly means, ‘ I *adjure* you,’—I charge you *upon oath*—that ye disturb not my love, &c. But how shall we reconcile this with the law of Moses, and the manners of the Hebrews, who were strictly forbidden to swear by any name except JEHOVAH ? I know that commentators and critics have not been unfruitful in evasions ; but they are, in general, so futile that I think them not worth reciting ; and would sooner at once confess my inability to untie the knot, than thus violently cut it. There is one circumstance, however, which may throw considerable light upon the expression.

Notwithstanding the Jews were commanded to swear only by the incommunicable name, they were admitted to call in witnesses to their oath, and in the want of others, the animals of the field were judged sufficient, or perhaps preferred. A

remarkable instance of this occurs in the history of Abraham and Abimelech. After swearing an oath of fidelity, and making the usual presents on such occasions—‘ Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs, which thou hast set by themselves? And he said, These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a WITNESS unto me that I have digged this well’. The same custom, it appears, is continued in the east to the present day; and points out the proper use of these ‘ antelopes and hinds of the field,’ as *witnesses* to the solemn adjuration in this poem. This is indeed hinted at among the *seven senses* enumerated by Dr. GILL, who remarks that ‘ sometimes heaven and earth, animate and inanimate creatures, are called in scripture’

¹ Gen. xxi. 30. I confess myself indebted to the ingenious editor of Calmet for this passage, produced for a very different purpose in his Fragments, No. LXIII. (P. 111.) where he mentions a similar covenant between Mr. Bruce, the celebrated traveller, and an Arabian shekh. To account for the introduction of deer instead of sheep, it is only necessary to suppose that the former might be in sight, and not the latter; though it might be added, antelopes and hinds are some of the finest objects of poetic imagery.

As to the particle *Beth* ב, which I have rendered *before* instead of *by*, I think I have at least kept equally to its radical idea—*in*, which ought to be preserved in all its various renderings; e. g. *In—into—within—in* respect of—in the manner of—in opposition to—in connexion with—in the midst of—in presence of, i. e. *before*, which I conceive to be the best rendering here, and in some other texts.

² See Deut. xxx. 19. Josh. xxiv. 27.

to bear witness to solemn charges and covenant engagements.

The improvement of this difficult verse shall be comprised in two ideas.

1. That true love deprecates every thing calculated to disturb the harmony, or injure a good understanding between the parties. Doth Christ love his church? Then must he be offended at every attempt to disturb her peace, or alienate her affection from him.—Do we love Christ? Then shall we, with pious jealousy, guard against whatever has a tendency to dishonour his name, to grieve his Spirit, or offend his love.

‘ I charge my sins not once to move,
 ‘ Nor stir, nor wake, nor grieve my love.’

WATTS.

2. The whole creation witnesseth for God against apostates. If after engaging ourselves by covenant to be the Lord’s, and professing to be his disciples, we turn our backs upon religion, and renounce his service, not only will our friends and neighbours, our children and servants, bear witness against us, but the very animals who saw our former professions and devotions, will rise up against us in judgment. Yea, the very timber and stones of our dwelling will witness against us, if we deny our God¹.

¹ Josh. xxiv. 27.

SECTION IV.

Chap. II. ver. 8, 9.

Spouse. The voice of my beloved ! behold he cometh,
 Leaping on the mountains, bounding on the hills.
 My beloved resembles an antelope, or a young hart.
 Behold him standing behind our wall ;
 Looking through the windows,
 Displaying himself through the lattice work.

THESE verses open a new scene, and, according to many expositors, a new *day*. But as repose is very customary in warm countries in the middle of the day, I am not certain but this may refer to the afternoon or evening, especially as there is nothing in the description which particularly marks the morning.

Dr. GILL connects this section with the former in this manner: he supposes the spouse to have heard the beloved give a tender charge to the virgins not to disturb her, and that thereupon she arises and exclaims, ‘ Behold ! it is the voice of my beloved ! ’ To me, however, this appears unnatural and absurd, because here she sees him at a distance ‘ leaping on the mountains, and bounding upon the hills.’

Another critic supposes ‘ the voice of the bride-groom ’ to be the sound of the music which attended him ; and I conceive such an allusion not improbable ; and that in verse 10, the chorus is introduced : ‘ Arise, my consort, and come away ! ’

The imagery is here so easy and beautiful as to require little illustration. The beloved is seen first at a distance hastening to his love, with the

speed of an antelope or a young hart¹—then he stops behind the green wall of the garden—or shews himself, in his bridal dress, through the lattices of the choisk²—and here invites her to enjoy with him the opening charms of summer, of which Mr. HARMER has shewn the following verses to be an accurate description; and that they mark the time to be about the end of April, which answers to June in our climate.

Little difficulty occurring in the literal sense of this section, we apply immediately to the allegory, and enquire,

1. Why is the heavenly bridegroom compared to the antelope or the young hart? I reply, not only on account of the beauty of those amiable creatures, but chiefly for their swiftness, as intimating the alacrity with which the Messiah came, in the first instance, for our redemption; and the readiness with which he still flies, in the hour of distress for our relief. Even in the painful work of redemption, with what cheerfulness did he undertake, and with what willingness did he suffer! ‘Lo! I come,’ saith he, ‘to do thy will,

¹ That the Hebrew *Zabi* (צִבִּי) intends the antelope or gazelle, is the opinion of Dr. Shaw, Buffon, and Sir W. Jones: and certain it is, this is one of the most beautiful animals in creation. In this place the LXX add, ‘On the mountains of Bethel.’ But this seems both unnecessary and unintelligible.

² Displaying himself [מציץ] literally *flowering* through the lattice work: an allusion to flowers which penetrate the open work of lattice windows, and bloom on the other side. Such a circumstance was noticed with admiration by Mr. Stewart, in his journey to Mequinez, quoted by Mr. Harmer.

‘ O my God,’ though he knew that will required that he should sacrifice his life. And after he had assumed human nature, and began to be ‘ a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,’ he cries, ‘ I have a baptism to be baptized with,’ alluding to his sufferings, ‘ and how am I straitened until it be accomplished !’

Nor is the Saviour less ready, now he is exalted to power and to glory, to fly to the salvation of his people. How often hath his church in the most perilous circumstances experienced his delivering hand ! And how often have we as individuals found him to be ‘ a very present help in time of trouble !’

2. Our next observation relates to the gradual manner in which the beloved discovers himself—upon the hills—behind the wall—and through the windows of the choise. Commentators apply this to the gradual discoveries of Messiah under the Old Testament, which was like ‘ the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’ In the antediluvian ages he appeared as on the distant mountains, shrouded with a morning cloud ; by the revelations made to Abraham and his family, he drew nearer, and was more distinctly seen ; but in the types and emblems of the Mosaic æconomy he displayed himself with great beauty, and in great glory. Under this dispensation lived the writer of this poem. We know that he saw the Redeemer’s glory, and spake of him, not only in this song but in some of the psalms, and, as they are commonly

understood, in several chapters of the Proverbs.

This dispensation introduced the gospel, in which the voice of the Redeemer calls up his church to arise and enjoy its privileges. Thus he speaks :

Chap. II. Ver. 10—13.

Bridegroom. ‘ Arise ! my consort, my beauty, and come
 ‘ away,
 ‘ For, behold ! the winter¹ is past ;
 ‘ The rain is over—is gone.
 ‘ The flowers appear upon the earth :
 ‘ The time of the singing² [of birds] is come :
 ‘ The voice of the turtle dove is heard in our
 ‘ land :
 ‘ The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs :
 ‘ The vines, [with] their tender buds³ yield
 ‘ fragrancy :
 ‘ Arise ! my consort, my beauty, and come
 ‘ away.’

¹ ‘ Winter.’ The word סתו, used only in this place, is generally considered as a Chaldee word, and the Jewish critics draw a mystery from it, on the supposition of its referring to the Babylonian captivity. But Mr. Parkhurst derives it from the Hebrew סת, to stir, disturb, *q. d.* The disturbed season; and observes from Niebuhr, that the Arabs call their winter *Schitte*.

² ‘ Time of singing,’ דוּמִיר. So R. Sol. Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and other Jewish, with most Christian writers. But the LXX read ‘ The time, τὴν ῥοῆν, of cutting,’ *i. e.* pruning vines, which it is admitted the word may signify, and which agrees well enough with the season. The former sense, however, I have preferred as most poetical, and consonant to the other images.

³ ‘ Tender buds.’ Our translators read *grapes*, but this is carrying the season too far. Dr. Gill says *smadar*, סמדר, signifies to *flower*. So Symmachus renders it here by *ανανθη*, the vine blossom, and the *Vulgate* by *florantes*: The LXX, however, render it, *κνυρίζειν*, to bud; and in chap. vii. 12. by *κνυσισμὸς*, a bud—the budding of a flower, which agrees exactly with the marks of the season—for the vines and roses bud and blow very nearly at the same period. Both eastern vines and roses, when in bloom, are extremely fragrant. See Harmer on Sol. Song, p. 138, 139.

In examining the literal sense of this passage, we must be struck with the beautiful description of an eastern spring: one circumstance only requiring an illucidatory remark; namely, that in Judea, and the neighbouring countries, the rains are periodical, and when the spring-rains are over, which is about the end of April, a succession of fine weather follows, without those changes to which we are subject.

There is no doubt but if this passage be allegorized, it must be referred to the *gospel* dispensation compared to the spring¹, in which I hope we may be allowed to trace the following resemblances.

1. The spring is preceded by the winter: so the times of the gospel were preceded by ages dark, barren, and tempestuous, especially in the heathen world. The apostle Paul calls them ‘times of ignorance,’ and it is very evident they were times of great wickedness. They ‘sat in ‘darkness and the shadow of death.’

2. The spring is a season of fruitfulness. Now the flowers blossom, the figs gather sweetness, and the vines yield fragrancy; so, under the gospel, those nations who in time past were barren

¹ So *Theodoret*, and the Christian commentators in general; and not these only, but certain of the Jewish writers, as quoted by Bp. Patrick. *Benjamin Tudelensis*, for instance, in the conclusion of his *Itinerary*, expressly applies these words to the coming of Messiah; confessing that Israel ‘cannot be gathered to their own land till the ‘time of the singing of birds come, and the voice of the ‘turtle; and till they come who preach glad tidings, say—‘ing away,—The Lord be praised!’

and unfruitful, have become fruitful in every good word and work : And individuals who before conversion are barren toward God, or bring forth none but the wild and poisonous fruits of nature, when quickened by the grace of God, " bring forth fruits meet for repentance ;" fruits of righteousness, and holiness, and peace. ' For ' as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the ' garden causeth the things that are sown in it to ' spring forth : so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all ' people'.

3. The spring is a season of love and joy, both which ideas are expressed by the voice of the turtle and the singing of birds². So the gospel is a dispensation of love and joy. What is the gospel message but a display of the love of God to sinners ? What, but love, is the principle of gospel holiness ? God's love is the argument, not only of our love to him, but to one another : just as the love of a tender father is not only a ground of gratitude from the children, but of mutual love between each other.

¹ Isa. lxi. 11.

² The eastern poets feign the nightingale to be in love with the rose, because they both appear together in the spring. So *Hafez* : ' The beauty of the age of youth returns again to the meads ; joyful tidings from the rose ' arrive to the nightingale of the sweet songs.' *Sadi* reckons the nightingale as the herald of the spring : ' Bring, O nightingale, the tidings of spring ; leave all unpleasant ' news to the owl.' The author of *Bahur Danush* joins ' the strain of the bulbul,' (or eastern nightingale) with ' the cooing of the turtle dove.'

Jones's Pers. Gram. p. 19. *Bahur Danush*, vol. III. p. 180.

The gospel is also a dispensation of joy. There is joy in heaven over every repenting sinner; and there is joy also in the church of God, over every addition to their number. But especially is there joy in the heart of every converted sinner, so soon as he is assured of his interest in evangelical blessings.

4. The spring is a kind of resurrection of nature, which appears as if dead during great part of the winter season: but in spring the flowers, the trees, and the herbage are all renovated, as by a new creation. We have observed above, that the gospel found the world, as it finds every individual, in a state of barrenness and death.—Men are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, until a living principle of faith is by grace implanted in their hearts.

5. The causes and progress of this renewal in nature and grace, are strikingly analogous.

Winter, it is well known, is brought on chiefly by a change of the relative position of the earth and the sun. It is not that the sun is really weaker in itself, but from this change of position its rays falling obliquely upon the globe, are weakened in their effect; the earth gets gradually cooler, and the long nights and short days, greatly contribute as well to the coldness, as the gloominess of winter. So it is in the other case. The Sun of righteousness is eternally the same. His glory and his strength admit of no diminution. But the fall has so placed us, that, in our natural state we receive not the direct beams of his grace; but only, if I may so speak, the oblique bles-

sings of his providence. When “the Sun of
 “righteousness ariseth with healing in his *beams*,”
 then the spiritual spring commences, and the new
 creation smiles. These changes, however, both
 in nature and in grace are gradual. We are not
 instantaneously plunged into the cold and dark-
 ness of winter; neither are we all at once warm-
 ed and dazzled with the strength of a midsummer
 sun. It is a mercy that we are not; and strongly
 marks the wisdom and the goodness of divine
 Providence. But as the days are lengthened, and
 our part of the globe gradually falls more directly
 under the solar rays, the earth gets warmer, the
 sap is drawn upwards in the plants and trees, and
 the earth assumes the gay and splendid livery of
 spring. So in the great seas toward the poles, as
 the sun gathers strength in becoming more ver-
 ticle in those parts, the prodigious masses of ice
 in those seas melt away; mountain after moun-
 tain breaks, dissolves, and swells the tides, and
 overflows the boundaries of the ocean.

Thus gradual also are the effects of the beams
 of our spiritual Sun, both on the church at large
 and on its individual members. When a revival
 takes place in the church, it begins in one family,
 or in one congregation; it spreads to another and
 another—from parish to parish—from city to city
 —from village to village—till it covers a whole
 province, or a country. Religion, when it pros-
 pers, kindles and spreads like the flame in a forest,
 from tree to tree, and from bush to bush, till
 the whole wood becomes one universal conflagra-

tion. ‘Behold,’ in this sense, ‘how great a matter a little fire kindleth!’

Equally gradual is its progress in an individual. The mountains are levelled, and the valleys are exalted. Like the ices at the poles, first one lust, or one vice is broken off, or melted down, and then another, till the whole man is changed, and becomes altogether a new creature.

It must be confessed, however, that there is no rule without exceptions. Sometimes a warm day bursts on us at once, almost in the midst of winter: thus, in some instances, the change wrought in conversion is so sudden, and so great, as to challenge the admiration of all around, and they are ready to say, as of the blind man restored—‘Is this he that was born blind?’—Is this he that was given to profaneness and all uncleanness?—Or with the wicked prophet in his parable—‘Lo! What hath God wrought!’

Again, the return of spring, at least in this country, is often checked by intervals of severe, inclement weather; and the more so when the season is earlier than usual. When, as we said, summer appears coming on us at once: vegetation is pushed forward by the genial warmth, the trees bud, and perhaps blossom, when a sudden reverse of frost takes place, nips the swelling buds, and withers the opening blossoms. So is it oftentimes with young converts, especially with those called from a state of open profaneness;

The change is so obvious and so great, that they appear transported, as it were, to another climate—to another world. A spiritual summer is come suddenly upon them, and they appear, all holy joy, all heavenly love: but in a little while ‘offences arise because of the word.’ The storms of persecution, or the blasts of temptation nip the opening graces of the Christian life, and the promised fruits of holiness.

‘The winter is past.’—The TARGUM applies this to the captivity of Israel in Egypt, and other writers to the captivity in Babylon; justly conceiving that a state of captivity and bondage is properly represented by the image of winter, and the restoration of liberty and peace by spring. This applies to the gospel dispensation, and its blessings. Men are by nature servants of sin, bond-slaves of Satan, led captive by him at his will. The voice of the gospel is like the sound of the jubilee trumpet, the proclamation of true liberty. ‘If the Son make ye free, then shall ye be free indeed.’

‘The flowers appear.’—The same Jewish commentators, who consider the winter as a state of captivity or bondage, explain the flowers of Moses and Aaron—of the Old Testament believers, and of the Messiah himself; and the young figs and grapes of the congregation of Israel: and, without following Jewish fancies, or Jewish fables, believers may, under the gospel dispensation, be considered as a kind of first fruits unto

God—the earnest of that grand harvest which shall be gathered by the angels, in the end of the world.

Ver. 14.

Bridegroom. ‘ My dove, [who art] in the clefts of the rock,
 ‘ In the secret fissures of the cliffs ;
 ‘ Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy
 ‘ voice,
 ‘ For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance
 ‘ is comely.’

The spouse is compared to the dove for her innocence, affection, and fidelity, of which this bird is the established emblem. The dove is innocent. ‘ Be ye harmless as doves,’ is one of the precepts of the Saviour to his disciples, who are required in this, as well as in other respects, to imitate their Master, who was ‘ holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The cleanliness, the purity, and the modesty of these creatures are also no improper circumstances to describe the followers of the *Lamb*—a character very similar to that of the dove.

The dove is also the emblem of conjugal affection and fidelity. Constant to her mate, the faithful bird admits no other partner of her affections, and is inconsolable in his loss ; insomuch, that to “ mourn like the widowed dove,” is to mourn and grieve indeed. How truly is this the description of the sincere believer—of the church of Christ. He is the supreme object of her affection—“ Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there “ is none on earth that I desire beside thee ?” Without the divine presence the church is utterly

inconsolable. ‘O that I knew where I might
 ‘find him!’—She enquires, ‘Have ye seen my
 ‘beloved?’ or, apostrophizing the great object
 of her regard, ‘Tell me, O thou whom my soul
 ‘loveth, where thou feedest!’

In the present instance, however, the term
 may be rather expressive of the bridegroom’s
 love than of the bride’s. ‘My love, my dove,
 ‘my undefiled,’ are terms of the strongest ten-
 derness and attachment.

Eastern doves are wont to hide themselves in
 the cliffs and caverns of rocks¹. The dove is a
 feeble, timid, and defenceless bird, and may there-
 fore seek to hide itself in such recesses from the
 birds of prey, and from the storms of winter.
 And how often has this been the case with the
 church? How often has she been glad to hide
 herself in woods and solitary places, yea in ca-
 verns and in clefts of the rocks, to escape the
 storms of persecution, or the rage of persecutors?
 and in these retirements to worship God, and en-
 joy communion with him, out of the reach of the
 talons of the persecutor. Ah! ye Waldenses—
 ye Albigenses—ye Piedmontese—how often was
 this your case?—Yes, and ye ancient British
 nonconformists (of whom the world was not wor-
 thy) how often have ye retired to some solitary
 cottage in the wood, or in the forest—how care-
 fully have ye closed the door—the chimney, and
 every avenue of sound—that the listening informer

¹ Harmer on Sol. Song, p. 254.

might not hear? But ‘ the Lord hearkened and
‘ heard, and a book of remembrance was written
‘ in his presence.’

But from the following couplet it should appear that *solitude* might be the motive of retirement. The church is compared to a solitary dove, hiding among the rocks; and therefore her Lord calls upon her to come forth from her solitude, to shew her countenance and express her love. This hint will afford several useful reflections.

1. There is an ill-timed and improper solitude. In the primitive church, in times of persecution, there were many who had not the courage to confess Christ boldly, who yet dared not treacherously renounce him; and what should these do? They retired into solitude; there at once to avoid their enemies and enjoy their God. This was the origin of the hermetic life, which was afterward carried to excess; and weak, though sincere, Christians, fled from the standard of the cross, though they loved and would not renounce it. But there were others *more noble* than these, who were not ashamed nor afraid to avow their attachment to their crucified Redeemer before kings. The one sought to avail themselves of their Lord's permission, when persecuted in one city to flee to another: the other aspired to crowns of martyrdom—and they attained them.

The gentle voice of Christ reproves the timid conduct of his weak disciples—‘ Come forward,’

as if he had said without a figure—‘ come forward,
 ‘ and own yourselves to be mine.—Let me see thy
 ‘ countenance and hear thy voice¹.’

But there is probably another allusion. The solitary dove retires to *moan*² among the rocks, and sadly entertain her sorrows with the echo of her own complaints. How true a picture of many a distressed believer—but let such listen to the call of the beloved.

‘ The winter is past :’—then why mourn among the rocks. The gospel abounds with motives and grounds of joy, and is full of topics of consolation. You are a sinner :—to such only is the gospel addressed.—You are a *great* sinner :—you have the more need then to seek a “ great “ salvation.” You have multiplied transgressions: and he has promised to multiply pardons. You cannot repent: it is his office to give repentance as well as remission of sins. But you have no faith: “ O ye of little faith, wherefore do ye “ doubt?” Why fly from the Saviour you so much need? To whom will ye go? he only has the words of eternal life.—Why then waste your com-

¹ The following Hindostan Ode, by the Emperor Shah Aulum, presents us with exactly the same form of expression.

‘ Shew me thy face, O my love !

‘ Let me hear thy voice, ere you quit me.’

Oriental Col. vol. II. p. 394.

² ‘ The wild dove who soothes me with her notes, like
 ‘ me has a dejected heart.’ Carlyle’s specimens of Arab.
 Poetry.

plaints on the winds, and increase your griefs, by reverberating them among the echoing rocks? Let him see your countenance—let him hear your voice. Go then to the throne of grace, shew thyself cheerful in his house of prayer : for to him thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is comely. The world may deride thy cries, and ridicule thy grief : but tears of penitence are pearls in his sight ; and the sighings of a contrite heart are melody in his ears.

Ver. 15.

Virgins. Take for us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines,
For our vines have tender buds.

These words are evidently the language of the chorus, and seem addressed by the virgins to the companions of the bridegroom, requesting their protection and defence, under the metaphor of defending the vineyard from the foxes, which not only disturb the vineyard, and devour the grapes ; but gnaw the branches and roots, so as to destroy the vines. It should be remembered that the Jewish weddings were commonly attended with a guard ; and this was particularly the case in the present instance. See chap. III. 7.

It is pretty well agreed among the commentators and divines, that by *foxes* here may be allegorically understood false prophets among the Jews, and false or heretical teachers among ourselves. This idea is certainly scriptural. EZEKIEL says, “ O Israel, thy prophets are like *foxes* in the desert.” What do foxes in the

desert ? No doubt they lie in wait for prey; watching for any animal that may fall within their power, of which they may be able to make a prey. On this character I beg to offer a few remarks.

The Fox is the emblem of treachery, and his character, I apprehend, comprizes two things, cunning and cruelty. This gives us the true description of a false prophet and an heresiarch. He is a man of an artful head and a hard heart. The object of the false prophet was to mislead the Israelite from the worship of the true God to the adoration of idols. The character of the heretic is that of an artful sectary, who endeavours to withdraw Christians from the simplicity of Christ, in order to raise a party, or a name. The attentive reader may observe, in the New Testament, a strong line of distinction between mistaken brethren and heretical teachers. To the former is shewn all tenderness and compassion: to the latter none. This can only be accounted for by marking the difference of character. Heretical teachers have a base and corrupt design: they are charged with "cunning craftiness," whereby they "lie in wait to deceive:" mistaken brethren are deluded and deceived.

By *little* foxes may¹ perhaps be meant the *jackalls*, which though small are most dangerous and destructive; for the jackall often precedes

¹ The LXX, and some Heb. copies, omit the second word, *foxes*; and read, 'Take us the little foxes,' &c.

the lion, and is proverbially his provider. Even this may be allegorized without violence. Those are the most dangerous errors which have the worst moral tendency. Those erroneous teachers who labour to set aside the Saviour, or to smooth the way to sin, may be too justly considered as the agents of him who, as “ a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.”

It is commanded to *take* these foxes : *i. e.* to detect, expose, and antidote their errors, and separate them from our communion : and it were well if the professed ministers of Christ went no farther. Such expressions have been too often perverted to imply the power of the sword ; and Peter’s sword we know was early stained with blood. The reason given is, that they spoil or destroy the tender grapes. Foxes, it seems, live and fatten upon grapes. Stript of its allegorical dress the meaning evidently is,

1. That such persons live on the spoil of others :
 ‘ they devour widows houses, and for a pretence
 ‘ make long prayers.’

2. That these heretics prey upon young Christians, and destroy the promise of their tender blossoms, and their early buds. The weaker age, the weaker sex, and the weaker talents, are peculiarly their prey—‘ they lead captive silly women.’

It may be a useful improvement of this verse, to point out some of the pretences that false teachers employ to delude weak minds—and some traits of weakness that expose certain characters to their deceptions.

It was a common practice among antient heretics to affect peculiar austerities. The old naturalists say, that foxes will sometimes feign themselves dead, in order to ensnare their prey : so it is with some who affect to be uncommonly dead and mortified to the world, in order to draw disciples.—Another pretence made use of is, the attributing greater glory to Christ. Thus, under the notion of making him our sanctification, holiness has been discarded as legal, and Christ himself has been made, virtually, the minister of sin.

Among the circumstances which subject certain tempers to delusion, are the following.

The love of something new and beyond the vulgar ken is a great snare with weak minds. They are fond of mystery, love to penetrate into deep subjects of enquiry, and are particularly pleased to be thought wiser than their fellow Christians. The *gnostics* appear to have been of this stamp. The affectation of novelty and singularity is another great snare, in as much as it leads to useless and impertinent enquiries, and to be ‘ wise above what is written.’

Another dangerous temptation is, that of affecting to be super-evangelical and high in doctrine ; an affectation that reproaches, not only the best men of modern times, but the apostles, and our Lord himself, many of whose discourses would by no means answer to the standard of these hyper-orthodox divines.

Ver. 16, 17.

Spouse. My beloved is mine and I am his ;
 He feedeth among the lilies.
 Until the day breathe, and the shades flee away,
 Return, my beloved, and be unto me
 Like an antelope, or a young hart, upon the craggy
 mountains.

These verses stand perfectly distinct from the preceding, and form a sense complete of themselves. The spouse expresses her satisfaction in her relation to her beloved, and the enjoyment of his affections, with a desire for their continuance.

‘ My beloved is mine, and I am his¹.’ *i. e.* I am his spouse, and he is my husband. This relation between Christ and the church has been already explained, and it is desireable to avoid repetition ; but we may enlarge a little upon the mutual affection between the parties, and their mutual interest in each other.

‘ My beloved is mine.’ He is the supreme object of my affection, the sum of all my delights. ‘ Whom have I in heaven but thee ? ‘ and there is none on earth that I desire beside ‘ thee.’ The love of God is not only supreme, but, where it eminently prevails, in a manner absorbs all other affections. Those who love God eminently, love their fellow creatures *in him*. In him they embrace all the tender connexions

¹ ‘ From the moment that I heard the divine sentence, “ I have breathed into man a portion of my Spirit,” ‘ I ‘ was assured that we were his, and he ours.’ Sir W. Jones’s Works, vol. I. p. 45.

of human life—husband and wife—parent and child—brother, and sister, and friend. All are beloved in God, when they are beloved for his sake; when all human affections are regulated by our regard to him.

“ I am his.” I am the object of his love. That God should be the object of a creature’s love is most just and reasonable; but why should God delight himself in creatures? How wonderful that expression of the Lord in the prophet—
‘ I will rejoice over her with singing!’

Is it enquired how God and his elect come to have this propriety in each other? I reply,

(1.) By *mutual choice*. ‘ I have loved thee,’ saith the Lord, ‘ with an everlasting love, and ‘ therefore with loving kindness have I drawn ‘ thee.’—‘ We love him, because he first loved ‘ us.’—(2.) By *converting grace*. ‘ I have called ‘ thee by thy name, thou art mine.’ They that are with the Lamb are ‘ called, and chosen, and ‘ faithful.’—(3.) By *covenant engagement*. ‘ One ‘ shall say I am the Lord’s, and another shall call ‘ himself by the name of Jacob.’—(4.) By union of Spirit. Our first father said of his fair companion, ‘ She is bone of my bone, and flesh of ‘ my flesh:’ but the relation of Christ and the church, as it is spiritual, is more intimate: ‘ He ‘ that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.

‘ He feedeth among the lilies:’ that is, he feedeth in the best pastures; for in such lilies

appear to have grown spontaneously, like the wild flowers of our meadows. This expression was probably proverbial, and might be of similar import with a common proverb of our own. When we say familiarly, such an one is *in clover*, we mean that he is enjoying himself like cattle in rich pastures; in this view it would imply that the beloved, comparing him to the antelope or the young hart, (as in the following verse) was wont to enjoy himself in the company of the bride, like the deer feeding among the lilies.

But as the expression is equivocal, and may be taken either actively or passively, it will signify either he feeds himself, or he feeds his flock: we may therefore, with R. SOL. JARCHI, understand it as synonymous with the expression of the Psalmist, ‘He leadeth me into green pastures.’—Either sense will admit a useful application.

If the bridegroom be compared to the antelope ‘feeding among the lilies,’ it will refer to the pleasure and delight the Lord takes in the company of his church. The same sentiment is more clearly expressed in other passages of this song—‘O how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!’

If the bridegroom be considered in his pastoral character, then it applies to the Lord’s gracious care and attention to his people. If this latter sense be preferred, perhaps the whole verse may bear this explanation:—‘The Lord is my shepherd, and I am one of the sheep of his pasture;

‘ I shall not want, for he will supply, not only
 ‘ the necessary supports, but even the comforts
 ‘ and luxuries, as it were, of the divine life.’

In the preceding scene the bridegroom has been supposed absent; at the nearest he was standing behind the wall, or shewing himself through the lattices. The spouse now desires his speedy return—with the swiftness of the antelope, or young hart¹, upon the craggy mountains; and she implores his stay with her until the returning dawn².

In improving this verse we may observe,

1. That the church, in her present state, is subject to the vicissitudes of day and night; *i. e.* alternate seasons of light and darkness, prosperity

¹ ‘ Thou wert swift, O Morar, as the roe on the desert.’
Song of Selma, in Ossian's Poems.

² ‘ Craggy mountains.’—‘ Mountains of Bether,’ say our translators and others, taking Bether for a proper name, but what place this was can only be conjectured. Most critics, therefore, prefer taking the word according to its radical idea, for ‘ mountains of division,’ as in the margin of our Bibles; or rather divided, decussated, cleft, and craggy mountains. So the LXX, *ορη κοιλωματων*, mountains of cavities. Buxtorf says, *In montibus sectionis, i. e. sectis, disparatis.*

³ The sense of this verse appears to be obscured by the poetical position of the words. Reduced to simple prose, the text would read, ‘ Return, my beloved, like an antelope or a young hart upon the craggy mountains; and remain with me until the day breathe, and the shades flee away.’ Unless we chuse to give an unusual import to the particles ערש, and render it ‘ Ere that the day breathe,’ &c. *i. e.* return, my beloved, before the morning. The radical idea of ער, which is *perpetuity*, might justify this; (so *ere* and *ever* are connected and confounded in our language) but I confess I want examples.

and adversity, joy and sorrow ; and as it is with Christ's mystical body, so is it also with the individual members of which it is composed. The frames of the believer are various and changeable ; often suddenly so : at one time joy, delight, and triumph in the Lord : at another, coldness, dejection, and distress : now the brightness of an unclouded day ; anon the darkness of a moonless night.

2. In such seasons of darkness and affliction the absence of the Redeemer is sensibly felt, and his return to be ardently desired. If this night be applied to the Jewish state, under that dispensation the pious believers longed earnestly for the dawn of the gospel day, when the Sun of righteousness was to arise and chase the darkness and the gloom of that shadowy dispensation. If we apply it to the present state, and look forward to the future life, as an everlasting day of intelligence and joy, we know how indispensable the presence of our divine Shepherd is to carry us comfortably, or even safely, through this valley of the shadow of death.

3. The return of this divine Saviour is the only rational way in which we can look for returning light and joy.

The night may be illuminated by ten thousand torches, but still darkness reigns around : or it may be softened by the pale moon-beams and the twinkling stars, yet is it still night ; neither of these can chase the shadows of the night, and bring the dawn,

The beautiful imagery here employed merits farther observation: ‘until the day breathe¹, ‘and the shadows flee.’ The dawn of day in countries bordering the sea is constantly accompanied by fresh breezes from the water, which, in the east, particularly, are considered as equally salubrious and delightful; and to these the prophet has been thought to allude when he says, the ‘Sun of righteousness will arise with healing ‘under his wings².’ Thus indeed he arose, and at his rising the prophetic Spirit, ‘that heavenly ‘wind,’ also awoke, and gave health and healing, both literally and spiritually, to the nations among whom he arose.

What was the state of the world when Christ came? ‘Darkness covered the earth, and gross ‘darkness the people:’ but when he arose, he came, as it were, on the wings of the morning, and the shadows fled away. His doctrine dispelled the clouds of ignorance, which had been raised by Jewish priests and Gentile philosophers; and his example exhibited ‘a bright and shining ‘light,’ which has already illuminated more than half the world.

¹ ‘Until the day break’—(יער שיפוח) ‘according to the Hebrew text,’ says Dr. Gill, ‘until the day breathe.’ ‘Until the day blow fresh,’ says Bp. Percy; who adds, ‘In those hot countries the dawn of the day is attended with a fine refreshing breeze, much more grateful and desirable than the return of light itself.’

² See the Christian’s Elegant Repository, p. 33.

SECTION V.

Chap. III. Ver. 2—5.

Spouse. Upon my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loveth :

I sought him, but I found him not.

‘ I will arise now, and go about the city ;

‘ In the streets, and in the broad ways,

‘ I will seek him whom my soul loveth.’

I sought him, but I found him not.

The watchmen, who go round the city, found me ;

‘ Have ye seen him whom my soul loveth ?’

Scarcely had I passed from them,

When I found him whom my soul loveth :

I held him, and would not let him go,

Until I had brought him to my mother’s house,

To the apartment of her who bore me.

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,

By the antelopes, and by the hinds of the field,

That ye disturb not, nor awake this lovely one until he please.

THIS scene evidently opens with the morning : and I confess myself well satisfied with the hypothesis of Hufnagel, Dathe, and Doderlein, that this and the similar passage in chap. v. relate the dreams of the spouse ; indeed the latter passage is express, for no language can more justly and beautifully describe a dream than that of the spouse, ‘ I slept, but my heart wak-
‘ ed.’ And though the same introduction is not used here, a parity of circumstances, and similitude of style, lead us naturally to the same conclusion.

Solomon says ‘ a dream cometh from the mul-

'titude of business : ' and, without entering into the theory of dreaming, we may observe from our own experience, that the same objects which exercise the mind by day, often agitate it by night. The merchant dreams of business, the sportsman of the chase, and the lover of the beloved object. Thus it is with the spouse here. She had been ardently desirous of the presence of her beloved, and in her dream she anticipates his return : ' Upon my bed by night I sought ' him.'

But there is another reason which might lead Solomon to adopt this figurative mode of speaking. It was in this mode that God usually revealed himself to the prophets, and in particular to the author of this poem.

This method of interpretation silences many objections, and answers many queries, hard, if not impossible, to be answered on any other hypothesis. Such as, How should a princess be suffered to ramble about the city in the night, and be assaulted by the watchmen ? &c. A thousand circumstances combine in vision which never can exist together in reality. But let us examine the vision.

' By night on my bed I sought him¹.' Inter-

¹ Two circumstances have puzzled the commentators without reason, namely, the absence of the beloved by night ; and the spouse leading him to her mother's house. As to the former we have already observed, (p. 154) that after the consummation it was usual for the Hebrew bride and bridegroom to pass the remaining nights of the week separate. This appears also to have been the custom, at

preters generally consider this bed as the image of a state of supineness and of sloth : and suppose that the reason the spouse found not her beloved was, because she sought him in her bed. But is this appropriate and just ? Has not a bride a right to expect her husband to be the partner of her bed ?

Taking the passage according to our hypothesis, I may be permitted to offer the following reflections.

First. This dream shews how much the mind of the spouse was occupied with the object of her affection. He was the subject of her enquiry both by day and night. This will apply spiritually to the case of believers. DAVID tells us repeatedly how much his mind was occupied with God his Saviour in the night season : and it appears that this was the grand subject of the prophetic vision.—Jacob saw him on the celestial ladder ; David beheld him on the right hand of God ; and Daniel in the clouds of heaven.

2. There appears a restlessness in the con-

least for one night of the week, among the Greeks. In this case it is said the bride lodged at the house of her parents. [See Potter's *Antiq.* vol. II. p. 294.] As the Greeks borrowed many of their customs from the east, it is probable such a practice might obtain among the Hebrews during the nights of separation.—But how could Pharaoh's daughter sleep at her mother's ? Suppose only, that her mother had accompanied her from Egypt, (a circumstance probable also from ver. 11. of this chapter) and had a suit of apartments assigned for her in the palace, and it is easy to be accounted for. Though, after all, as I consider this only as a dream, I am not concerned to bring all the circumstances within the verge of probability.

duct of the church, which very well represents the state of a mind awakened to enquiries after the Lord. She sought him a-bed; but he was not there. She arose and sought him in the city—in the open court, and in the narrow street; hither and thither she pursues him—enquires of all she meets, and rests not till she finds him. Thus is it with an awakened soul—with one that seeketh after God. The mind being convinced of the true and only source of happiness, it is in vain to present other objects; it is the beloved of her soul she seeks, and her cry is with Job, ‘O that I knew where I might find him.’ She may find the watchmen, but they can be of no use, unless they direct to the beloved.

We must also notice what is said of these watchmen—their office and their conduct. We know that ministers of God, under both dispensations, have been called watchmen. So the Lord to Ezekiel: ‘Son of man, I have set thee a watchman over the house of Israel:’ and St. Paul explains the term in adapting it to ministers of the New Testament—‘They watch for souls.’ This is doubtless meant by going about the city: they are the guardians of the night, and it is their office particularly to notice such enquirers—‘They found me.’

It is observable in the next place that her enquiries were not eventually in vain. ‘They that seek shall find,’ is the great promise of the gospel. But when did she find her beloved? ‘It was but a little that I passed from *them*,’ namely,

the watchmen. It should seem that their information was of use to direct her ; for she met the object of her enquiries immediately afterward.

We must not omit to notice the affectionate and expressive character she gives him—‘ Him whom ‘ her soul loveth.’ Observe she gives him no name—and full (as we observed above¹) of the object of her love, she finds no name requisite—her soul loveth him, and she is ready to suppose that all must know him as well as she did.

She *found* him, and how did she then treat him ? She held him, and would not let him go, till she brought him to her mother’s house. The vision of Jacob, and the angel of Jehovah, will furnish us with a true explanation of this expression. He found him in Bethel : ‘ I will not let thee go,’ said he, ‘ except thou bless me.’—‘ He had power ‘ over the angel, and prevailed : he wept and made ‘ supplication unto him².’

She brought him to her *mother’s* house ; that is, according to most commentators, to the church, the temple, the house of God. Possibly the simple meaning may be, she conducted him where she could best enjoy his company ; but this will lead us to the same idea, for where is the divine presence so much to be enjoyed as in the house of God ?

Will the reader say, this was all a dream ? It was so ; and such are all our enjoyments in the

¹ See page 155.

² See Gen. xxxii. 24, and Hos. xii. 4.

present state. The golden objects of our vision present themselves—we embrace them, and they vanish.

‘ This world’s a dream, an empty show ;
 ‘ But the bright world to which we go
 ‘ Hath joys substantial and sincere :
 ‘ When shall I wake and find me there ?

WATTS.

This will apply even to spiritual enjoyments. ‘ When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that *dream*,’ says the Psalmist. And how true is this in the experience of the Christian ! Our brightest views of the divine glory are as imperfect and transient as a vision. While we enjoy these divine comforts we begin to doubt them—and what is the vision when withdrawn ?

The repetition of the chorus shews the conclusion of another scene—another day—and, with us, another section. But with what beauty or connexion is it here introduced ? She had dreamed of being in the company of her beloved, she supposes him still in her embraces, and she deprecates the loss of his presence. But I cannot forbear here introducing a few more lines from my favourite commentator—WATTS.

‘ I charge you, ‘all ye earthly toys,
 ‘ Approach not to disturb my joys ;
 ‘ Nor sin, nor hell, come near my heart,
 ‘ Nor cause my Saviour to depart.’

SECTION VI.

Chap. iii. Ver. 6—11,

- 1st *Virgin*. What is this rising from the wilderness, like
columns of smoke,
Fuming with myrrh, and frankincense,
More [precious] than all the powders of the
merchant ?
- 2d *Virgin*. Behold ! Solomon's own palanquin !
Threescore warriors surround it, the warriors
of Israel.
Every one having a sword, being skilled in war ;
Each [with] his sword upon his thigh,
Because of danger in the night.
- 1st *Virgin*. A carriage hath he made for himself,
Even Solomon the king, of the wood of Leba-
non.
The pillars thereof hath he made of silver :
Its carpet of gold ;—its seat¹ of purple :
The midst thereof being lined with love,
By the daughters of Jerusalem.
- 2d *Virgin*. Go forth, ye daughters of Zion, and view
King Solomon,
In the crown wherewith his mother crowned
him,
In the day of his espousals,
In the day of the gladness of his heart.

THIS section, like the preceding, seems not
well to admit of division.

A grand scene now opens upon our view. The
royal palanquin is seen coming up from the wil-
derness—i. e. from Egypt, which lay beyond the
wilderness. To render this scene intelligible, it

¹ Its cushion—the same word מִרְכָּבָה is used for a seat, or
saddle to ride on, Levit. xv. 9. It is properly, I think, the
seat of a carriage.—Beds, i. e. carpets of gold and silver
are mentioned, Esther i. 6.

may be necessary to give some account of the kind of carriage here introduced, and explain the other parts of the poetical imagery, before we attempt any spiritual application.

The use of *perfumes* at eastern marriages is common, and, upon grand occasions, very profuse. Not only are the garments scented till, in the Psalmist's language, they 'smell of myrrh, 'aloes, and cassia:' but it is customary for virgins to meet and lead the procession with silver-gilt pots of perfumes; and sometimes even the air around is rendered fragrant by the burning of aromatics in the windows of all the houses, in the streets through which the procession is to pass¹. In the present instance, so liberally were these rich perfumes burnt, that, at a distance, a pillar, or pillars² of smoke arose from them: and the perfume was so rich as to exceed in value and fragrantcy all the powders of the merchant³.

¹ Harmer on Sol. Song, p. 123—5.

² Twenty MSS. the LXX, Symmachus, the Syriac, and Vulgate, all read this word singular (חמר). The word used for *columns* means strictly palm trees, which from their height and straitness were often used for that purpose; and a pillar or column of smoke, in a calm atmosphere, strongly resembles that tree—rising very high, and then bending downwards. '*Columna, ad formam palmæ assurgentes.*' Buxtorf.

³ 'More (rich, excellent, or precious) *than*'—I take to be the exact force of the particle ׀ in this place. (See in Heb: Ps. iv. 8. cx. 3. Prov. iii. 14. Is. x. 10. Job xxxv. 2.) and so it is rendered by *Junius & Tremel. and Piscator*. I have rendered *abekat* (אבקת) *powders*, rather than *perfumes*, as more literal; and as comprehending *gold dust*, which was a grand article of commerce, and probably here alluded to.

There is some difficulty to fix the speakers, to me it appears that neither the bride nor bridegroom are introduced throughout the whole of this section; but that it is a kind of dialogue between the virgins, probably in two semi-choruses.

The *carriage* here introduced appears to have been a kind of *palanquin* of state, sufficiently large, perhaps, to inclose both bride and bridegroom¹. The magnificence of this carriage is

In preferring these perfumes to gold dust, and the powders of the merchant, I suppose there may be an allusion to the sacred perfumes of the temple, which were not to be manufactured or used for any other purpose, under penalty of death.

¹ The original word מטה is supposed to mean a kind of litter, or open vehicle, usually called a palanquin, in which the great men of the east are carried, sometimes upon elephants or camels, and other times on men's shoulders. The bier on which Abner was carried to his grave was probably of this nature. See Parkhurst in מטה. Niebuhr says, a palanquin completely ornamented with silver, covered with rich stuffs, and suspended on a handsome *bamboo*, will cost about 200*l.* sterling. Travels, vol. II. p. 410.

In the year 1796, the British government presented the Nabob of the Carnatic with a superb carriage of this nature, which may even vie with Solomon's, of which the following account is copied from the public prints of the time. 'The beams are solid gold, the inside beautifully decorated with silver lining and fringe throughout: the panels are painted in the highest style of finishing, and represent various groups and heads of animals, after the manner of Asia, beaded with gold richly raised above the surface, and engraved. The stays, and different other ornaments, are of embossed silver.'

The word *appirion* (אפריון) used in the next verse, and rendered by our translators *chariot*, is of very doubtful origin and import. Most of the critics derive it from a root (פרר) implying fruitfulness, and render it a *bridal-bed*, which was always expected to be fruitful. [So Lord Clarendon

not merely ideal; such are to this day employed by eastern nabobs, as may be seen in the margin.

A carriage seems also alluded to in the 45th psalm, but differing materially from this. *That* resembles more the war-chariot of a conqueror, and the prince goeth forth to victory, with his sword girded on his thigh. *This* is the palanquin of a new-married pair, accompanied with festivity and joy. In an allegorical view, the object intended is probably the same, only considered in a different point of view.

But what is this object? The TARGUM and Jewish commentators explain it of the temple; and this was indeed a magnificent object. But something grander than the temple is here; and THEODORET, and other Christian writers, explain it of the propagation of the gospel by its first ministers, whom he considers, not improperly, as pillars of the church.

The success of the gospel is sometimes consi-

calls a numerous family, 'The offspring of a very fruitful bed.'] But then it must mean such a bed as the Rabbins say the bride used to be carried in from her father's house to her husband's: i. e. a palanquin, or litter, and so the word is used in the *Misnah*. *Avenarius* makes it a compound word, signifying *a carriage upon wheels*; but the LXX. simply render it *Φορτίον*, a *carriage*; and from the similarity of sound, *Cocceius*, among others, has supposed the term to have been originally Greek, and hebraised (with other foreign words) by Solomon. *Pausanius* mentions a nuptial chariot which contained three persons, the bride, the bridegroom, and his friend. Something like this is the Indian palanquin called *Palki*, in which the bride and bridegroom are carried upon men's shoulders.

dered under the image of a victory, and at other times under that of a marriage festival. The latter is the figure now before us. This gospel chariot has set most of the expositors a riding ‘ upon the back of all order and decorum.’ The love of allegory is a great snare to a commentator; and the small expence of genius or labour necessary to please the million, in this way, has tempted many into a method of interpretation, which has given the enemies of gospel truth too just occasion of reproach and ridicule. Instead then of distinctly considering the top and bottom, the pillows and the lining, &c. let us observe in this carriage an image of the magnificence and beauty—security and perpetuity of the gospel.

1. The magnificence and beauty of the gospel is like the simple architecture of the antients. Its grandeur is not that of a heavy uniform pile of buildings; nor does its beauty arise from a profusion of unmeaning ornaments: but there is a magnificence and unity in the design, a proportion and symmetry in its parts, which forms a character of beautiful simplicity. A few circumstances may be mentioned.

The grand design of the gospel is the glory of the divine perfections, in their harmony and connexion. The God of Christians is a Deity

‘ full orb’d,
 ‘ In his whole round of attributes complete.’

All human schemes sacrifice one attribute to

the honour of another ; usually justice and holiness to mercy and benevolence. ‘ Here ‘ mercy ‘ and truth meet together ; righteousness and ‘ peace kiss each other.’

The gospel exhibits a unity of design, a beautiful simplicity and proportion in all its parts. Such is the relation and connexion between the truths of revelation, that one cannot be rejected or denied alone. They are links of the same chain, which is broken if one be lost. The doctrine of human depravity connects with that of gratuitous pardon. The doctrine of human imbecility with that of divine influences ; and so of the others. Each truth hath also its appropriate station in the system ; and the various doctrines are like the steps of Jacob’s Ladder ; they connect earth and heaven. ‘ For whom he pre- ‘ destined, them he also called ; whom he call- ‘ ed, them he also justified ; and whom he jus- ‘ tified, them he also glorified.’

The beauty of the gospel, I have said, arises in great measure from its simplicity. It has indeed been loaded with rites and ceremonies ; but these are meretricious ornaments, altogether foreign and unsuitable. Truth is like the Ionic column, which charms from its simplicity ; and when disguised by foreign ornaments is like the same pillar loaded with the votive gifts, the cockle-shells and relicks of pilgrims.—It is the same, but it is obscured—it is degraded.

2. The scene before us may represent the se-

curity and permanency of the gospel. The gospel indeed first spread, not only without, but in opposition to all the powers on earth. Uncountenanced and unprotected, who could have thought that twelve poor fishermen could have propagated through the world a system so unflattering to human vanity, so repulsive to human passions? But they were not unprotected. Of this chariot it is said that threescore valient men are about it, i. e. that it is securely guarded. So was the gospel. Not by human wisdom or human might; but by the Spirit and the power of God. This guard is like that of the prophet Elijah:—He appeared unprotected and alone, and his servant trembled at the surrounding hosts—‘O my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!’ But when his eyes were opened, behold the mountain was filled with chariots and horses of fire. Such has been the security of the gospel. ‘A hand unseen’ has protected it against all the powers of tyranny and persecution: and hence it remains to this day, and shall survive all its enemies and opposers.

How often have the princes of the world threatened to annihilate the gospel! And when the sword has failed, and there has appeared no hope of destroying it by force, the powers of wit, of genius, and of learning, have confederated to oppose it. For a moment they partially succeeded, and began to rear their monuments of victory. But already the colossus of infidelity begins to crumble, and the stone cut out of the

mountain without hands shall fall on it and grind it into powder¹.

3. The gospel is a system of benevolence and love. Of this chariot it is said, that it is 'lined with love;' that is probably, the lining was wrought with amatory emblems—of which this book might furnish a variety—as the rose and lily, the dove, the mandrake, and many others². Apply this to the gospel—it is *lined with love*—it is full of love—for what is the gospel but the good news of the love of God to sinners? And what is its design, but to kindle the purest love in the hearts of believers, both toward God and to each other? While this scheme of salvation ascribes "Glory to God in the highest," it proclaims also "peace on earth, and good will to-wards men."

This carriage was lined with love *by* the daughters of Jerusalem, and probably received as a present *from* them³; for we know that the Jewish women excelled in needle-work and embroi-

¹ See Dan. ii. 35. and Matt. xxi. 44.

² Lady M. W. Montague observes, the inside of the Turkish coaches is painted with baskets and nosegays of flowers intermixed commonly with little poetical mottoes. And it appears by a quotation just given, (p. 254) that the Asiatic palanquins are embellished in a manner somewhat similar.

³ The preposition *mem* (מ) is not most usually *by* but *from*; in the present instance it probably includes both.—*Le Clerc* says, 'Mediamque stratam puellarum Jerosolymitarum amore;' and *Bp. Percy*, 'The middle thereof is wrought [in needle-work] by the daughters of Jerusalem, [as a testimony of their] love.'

dery : and it appears from this song, that it was not uncommon for the virgins, her attendants, to make presents to the bride. May not this be considered as an image of the gospel adorned by the lives of its professors? especially young converts, whose zeal and love are often eminently conspicuous?

4. The gospel dispensation contains a grand display of the royal mediatorial glories of the Lord Jesus. It is not the chariot only, but he that rideth in the chariot who merits our admiration. ‘Go forth and view King Solomon :’ but behold ‘A greater than Solomon is here.’ Jesus the true *prince of peace*, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. And it is a leading design of the gospel to exhibit him in his crown—in all the glories of his original dignity, and mediatorial character.

The gospel exhibits Jesus in all the glories of his primeval dignity—‘He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God.’—‘The Word was with God, and the Word was God.—‘The brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.’

But we have here chiefly to contemplate his mediatorial glory, and especially his kingly office—Let us go forth and behold King Jesus—‘the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.’

The kingdom of Christ has been greatly mistaken both by his enemies and friends. ‘We have no king but Cæsar,’ said the former insinu-

ating that his authority was inconsistent with the civil power; and often has this charge been reiterated on his followers; and stirred up more persecution than any other pretence. 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend,' stifled all the feelings of humanity in Pilate, as it has since done in many others, who prefer Cæsar's plaudit and rewards to the approbation of the great Supreme.

'But my kingdom,' said the Redeemer, 'is not of this world.' Let us enquire briefly in what respects it chiefly stands distinguished. First, It is not a *temporal* kingdom. Jesus did not aspire to the throne of Herod, or of Cæsar. He levied no army, and he assumed no state: and I am persuaded that he never will. That millennial dream, which brings him to reside on earth, and gives him a temporal dominion, debases the King of glory to an earthly prince. 'Behold, the heaven is his throne, and the earth his foot-stool!'

Nor is the kingdom of Christ a *mere* exercise of his authority in the churches, or congregations of his professing people: it may be a part, but it is a very inferior branch of his sovereignty. In short, his kingdom is in the hearts of men: 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' And such is that power, that these volunteers of grace shall be numerous as the dew drops of morning; and 'in the beauty of holiness' shall they be inlisted, and enrolled¹.

¹ Ps. cx.

But his dominion is not only in the hearts of his friends, but of his enemies. ‘ He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.’ ‘ The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth it, as he doth the rivers of waters, whithersoever he pleaseth.’ The empire of his Providence is universal—supreme—eternal.

5. The *crown* here more particularly referred to appears to be the nuptial crown—‘ the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals.’ Nuptial crowns were common both with the Jews and Greeks; among the latter the bride was crowned by her mother, and it should seem by this allusion, as Bp. PERCY observes, that the same custom obtained among the Hebrews¹. On inferior occasions these might be only flowery garlands²; but as the word here used is elsewhere taken for a royal and a golden crown³, it is most probable that such a crown is to be understood here. ‘ The day of his espousals, is, more literally, the day of his contracting affinity by marriage;’ in which I conceive is a particular allusion to the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh’s daughter; This might well be called ‘ the day of the gladness of his heart,’ as it allied him to the king of Egypt, the first sovereign of the age, (next to Solomon;) as well as because it put him in possession of his beloved bride.

¹ Ezek. xvi. 8, 12. ² Wisdom, ii. 7. ³ Ps. xxi. 3.

Some readers may expect me to be minute, and to distinguish the mother, the bride, and the daughters of Zion here referred to ; but I conceive this minuteness to be the bane of just interpretation of scripture allegories ; and that the church, or true believers, may be considered in certain respects under different relations to Christ, is evident from his own words : ‘ He that heareth my words, and keepeth them, the same is my mother, and my sister, and my brother.’

Should I be asked, which is the day of the *gladness of the Redeemer’s heart* ? I would answer, that day in which his people become related to him by their covenant engagements, and united to him by living faith ; which may be called the day of their espousals. Then they become his jewels—his joy—his crown ; and then they unite with the whole company in heaven and on earth to ‘ crown him Lord of all.’

I have one more remark to add on this chapter, which I borrow from Mr. Derham ; namely, that there seems to be a gradation in these verses. First, the spouse speaks of Solomon—then of *King Solomon*, and lastly of King Solomon in his *crown* ; on which that savoury commentator remarks, that the longer the church (whom he supposes to be the speaker) ‘ speaks of Christ, and insists in mentioning his excellency, her thoughts draw the deeper, she sets him up the higher, and becomes warmer in her apprehensions, affections, and expressions concerning him.’

SECTION VII.

Chap. IV. Ver 1—6.

Bridegroom. Behold thou art beautiful, my consort;
 Behold thou art beautiful!
 Thine eyes are doves, behind thy veil.
 Thy hair is like a flock of goats,
 Which come up sleek from [mount¹] Gilead.
 Thy teeth are like a flock [newly] shorn,
 Which ascend from the washing:
 All of them bearing twins,
 And none of them miscarrying.
 Like a brede of scarlet are thy lips,
 And thy speech is agreeable.
 Like the flower of the pomegranate
 Are thy cheeks behind thy veil.
 Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded
 for an armory:
 A thousand bucklers hang thereon,
 All shields of mighty men.
 Thy two breasts are like twin fawns of the an-
 telope,
 Feeding among the lilies.
 Until the day breathe, and the shades flee
 away²,
 I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
 [³And] to the hill of frankincense.

THE royal pair having alighted from their carriage, Dr. PERCY supposes the ceremony

¹ The word (גִּלְעָד) *mount* is wanting in nine MSS. LXX. and Arabic, and seems to clog the sense.

² The travels of *Egmont* and *Heyman* mention that the summer heats on the coast of the Holy Land are greatly moderated by the sea breezes every morning and evening. (See *Harmer* on Sol. Song, p. 283, 4.) And the late Mr. *Robinson*, of Cambridge, mentioned, on the authority of his son, who was then at Smyrna, 'that every morning, 'about sunrise, a fresh gale of wind blew from the sea 'across the land, which, from its wholesomeness and 'utility in clearing the infected air, is always called the 'Doctor.' *Christian's Elegant Repository*, p. 33.

³ Nearly sixty MS. omit this *and*.

of unveiling the bride¹ here to follow, and give occasion to his encomium on those features which the veil in great measure concealed, as the eyes, the cheeks, the teeth, &c. This ceremony was performed among the Greeks on the third day, when the bride appeared first in company without her veil, and on this occasion received presents from her husband. Something like this might be the custom among the Hebrews, with whom also this was a most essential article of dress.

But I am by no means satisfied, either that the Hebrews *had* such a custom, or if they had, that it is here alluded to; on the contrary, verse 3. seems to intimate that she was still veiled: and I observe that the eastern poets celebrate the charms of the fair through their veils, and improve this circumstance into an elegant compliment².

In running over the various beauties of her person he compares her *eyes*, as before³, to doves—

¹ The Hebrew particle (מבער) has been rendered both *within*, *without*, and *behind*; the last seems the more exact meaning, as may be seen in *Parkhurst*: i. e. her eyes beaming from *behind* her veil, as it is withdrawn, are compared to doves. That צמח *Tsammah* signifies the *veil*, rather than the *locks*, as in the common version, is the opinion of *Patrik*, *Parkhurst*, *Harmer*, *Percy*, and most modern expositors. So *Symmachus* in loc. and LXX. in Is. xlvii. 2.

² So *Hafez*, 'thy cheeks sparkle even *under* thy veil.' *Sir W Jones's Works*, vol. I. 453.

Another Persian poet says, 'It is difficult to gaze upon the Sun without the medium of a cloud:—View, therefore, O Saieb, the lovely face of thy mistress *through* her veil.' *Orient. Coll.* vol. II. 23.

³ Chap. i. 15.

her *hair*, for its sleekness and abundance, to a flock of goats from Gilead¹—and her *teeth*, for their whiteness, evenness, and uniformity, to a shorn flock—to a flock of ewes bearing twins, and none coming before their time². Her *lips* also he compares to scarlet threads, and commends her *speech* as agreeable and charming.

The next article of the comparison is more difficult to adjust. If we were to preserve the common version, ‘thy temples within thy locks,’ we might say the forehead was divided by the locks of hair into compartments like those of the pomegranate; but I confess myself satisfied that the word for the *temples*³ must as learned men have observed, include, or rather intend, the cheeks, which are always a prominent object in the description of female beauty; and the compa-

¹ The word *mount* is omitted in several MSS. the LXX, and Arabic, as in chap. vi. 5. Its omission makes a very slight variation in the original, and its insertion rather clogs and obscures the verse, the sense of which is at best equivocal. Either, 1. Up from Gilead to Jerusalem means from the country to the capital, as from Highgate up to London—so *Percy*; or 2. from the lower to the higher parts of the mountain—*Bochart* and *Patrick*; or 3. the words may perhaps be rendered, which shine (or browse) upon Mount Gilead, covering it from bottom to top—*Dr. Hunt*. Gilead appears to have been a place famous for pasturage, and probably they used to sheer sheep at the bottom of it.

Some expositors suppose the hair and teeth are compared to the hair of goats and teeth of sheep; the similarity may be exact enough, but this idea is far from natural or elegant.

² Bp. *Percy* follows *Le Clerc* in rendering מִתְאִיִּמּוֹת simply *twins*, and שְׂכֵלָה *orba*, *deprived*, as in Jer. xviii. 21.—‘all of them twins, and none hath lost its fellow.’ *New Trans.*

³ רִקְתָּךְ, *Μηλον σου*, LXX—Genæ tuæ; *Vulgate*, *Pagninus*, *Cocceius*.

rison of these to the *flower of the pomegranate*¹ is, according to Sir W. JONES, a common image in Asiatic poetry. Farther, if the bridal veil of the Hebrew ladies was like that of the Persians², made of *red* silk or muslin, it would throw a glow over the whole countenance, that will account more fully for this comparison.—If my reader, however, adheres to our translators in rendering it ‘a piece,’ or section ‘of the pomegranate,’ it may be remarked that the fruit itself, when cut open, is red, as well as the blossom³.

The spouse’s neck, adorned with necklaces, is compared to the tower of David, which was built for an armory, hung with shields and bucklers. Of this tower we know nothing certain, but that from the comparison it must have been tall, slender, erect and elegant. Such the house of the forest of Lebanon is supposed to have been, which was furnished with many hundred shields and targets of beaten gold⁴,

¹ פלח, *Eruptio floris*, *Simonis* : *Balaustium*, *Guarini*. ‘As the opening blossom of the pomegranate.’ *Patrick* after *Castell*, and *Henley* in *Lowth’s* Lect.

² The bridal veil of the Persian ladies was of *red* silk or muslin, (called by the Greeks *ερυος*, and by the Romans *flammeum*.) Such was Rebecca’s veil (צִיעָה) Gen. xxiv. 65. and the רֵעִילָה, Isa. iii. 19, according to *Schroeder*. *Orient.* Col. vol. I. p. 125.

³ ‘Thy cheeks are as a piece of pomegranate,’ which when cut up is of a beautiful vermillion.—Dr. *Durell*. ‘Like a slice of pomegranate are thy cheeks.’ Dr. *Hodgson*.

⁴ See 2 Chron. ix. 16. comp. with Isa. xxii. 8. Mr. *Sandys* says, this tower of David was a high tower, ‘in the utmost

intended no doubt to do honour to those brave men who signalized themselves in the defence of their country. The metaphor intimates that, thus adorned, her appearance was brilliant and captivating, and her charms as potent as the armour of the warrior.

The description closes with the *breasts*, which are compared to twin fauns of the antelope or gazel, feeding among the lilies. BOCHART¹, and others, explain this of the nipples upon the bosom, like young gazels in the corn-fields, where the lilies were wont to grow: but I have my doubts whether any thing more is intended than to describe them as beautiful, and elegant in form, like those lovely animals; which appear to be a favourite object of comparison with the writer, not only in this song, but also in the book of *Proverbs*, where he recommends fidelity to the marriage covenant in these figurative terms—‘Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished with her love².’

In the concluding verse the king compares his bride to a mountain of myrrh, or hill of frankincense, alluding to those fragrant groves of spices which were to be found in that coun-

‘angle of a mountain, whose ruins are still extant.’ As the Jews built with white stone or marble, this has been supposed a compliment to the spouses complexion.—But see note on chap. vii. 4.

¹ Hierozoic. tom. I. b. iii. c. 24.

² Chap. v. 19.

try¹; and implying the same sentiment expressed in a subsequent chapter, concerning the beloved—‘His mouth is most sweet, yea, he ‘is *altogether lovely*.’ In this verse is also an allusion to the chorus in a preceding chapter, where the beloved is compared to an *antelope*, (as he has just compared the breasts of the spouse to its twin fauns) and he intimates in reply, that as the antelope flies to the mountains, so would he *hie* to the arms of his bride; and as she had expressed her desire, ‘until the ‘day breathe and the shades flee away,’ he would solace himself in her chaste embraces².

The whole of the above description comprizes maturity, health, portliness and beauty; which are the general ideas suggested by the imagery, and might each be a little amplified without the violation of propriety or indecorum; but it is here unnecessary, as they all occur separately in different passages of the poem: I shall only therefore suggest a few

¹ It is said of Pompey the Great, that when he passed over Lebanon, and by Damascus, he passed through sweet-smelling groves and woods of frankincense and balsam. *Florus de gest. de Rom.* l. 3. c. 5.

The eastern poets, supposing angels not to be pure intelligences, feign that they have bodies of musk and amber, an image very similar to this of Solomon. See *Harmer* on Sol. Song, p. 290.

The *vau* (v) in the last line of this verse rendered *and*, is omitted in nearly sixty MSS. but is found in the LXX.

² This may seem hardly consistent with what is observed above, of the new married pair being separate, after the first night, during the remainder of the nuptial week; but perhaps that custom might not be so rigid as to admit no exception, especially when the bridegroom was a sovereign prince.

hints on some particular branches of the description.

Fine *bair* was not only an esteemed beauty among the Hebrews (witness the instance of Absalom) but was considered as a natural veil, and in married women, a sign of subjection to the matrimonial yoke¹. This applies to the church; for as 'the husband is the head of the wife,' even so is 'Christ the head of the church;' and as wives should be in subjection 'to their own husbands,' so should the church be subject unto Christ 'in all things.'

We have already considered the graces of the Spirit as the ornaments of the church, more precious than gold or silver, or precious stones. It seems from the figurative language here used, that these female ornaments were often wrought in the shape of *shields* and *bucklers*; as, among us, the ladies wear jewels in the form of hearts and anchors. These significant ornaments, wrought in the necklace, would give the female neck the appearance of what poetry would call, a little *armory*: and in these ornaments we may farther trace the resemblance of the Christian graces. The *golden shields* of faith adorn the neck of the church, and of the believer. And, as it has been hinted that these golden shields and bucklers were hung up in the tower of David in honour of his worthies, and to excite others to similar achievements: so hath the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhibited the *shields*, (i. e. the faith) of

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 15,

Old Testament believers, in honour to them, and as an encouragement to us.

What may be particularly signified by the breasts of the church, will be examined more particularly when we come to the last chapter of this book. At present I would only observe, the comparison here employed may be chiefly designed to intimate, that the bosom of the church, and of the believer, is the seat of purity, tenderness and affection; or, as Mrs. ROWE expresses it :

‘ Her breasts the seat of innocence and truth,
 ‘ Harmless and *pure* as twins of gentle roes,
 ‘ Which in some fragrant spot of lilies feed.’

When the heavenly bridegroom speaks of seeking, and resting in the chaste embraces of his church, every wanton idea should be at infinite distance. In different passages of the Old Testament, the Lord is said to *delight* himself, and to take *pleasure* in his saints—to *rejoice* over his church as a bridegroom in his bride—to *rest* in his love—and to rejoice with *singing*. Expressions which describe in the strongest manner that communion of the saints with their Redeemer which is the leading subject of this poem.

‘ Come, let me love : or is my mind
 ‘ Harden’d to stone, or froze to ice ?
 ‘ I see the blessed Fair-one bend,
 ‘ And stoop t’ embrace me from the skies.

‘ O ! ’tis a thought would melt a rock,
 ‘ And make a heart of iron move,
 ‘ That those sweet lips, that heav’nly look,
 ‘ Should seek and wish a mortal love !’

WATTS.

SECTION VIII.

Chap. IV. Ver. 7, 8.

Thou art all beautiful, my consort,
 And blemish is not in thee.
 Come unto me from Lebanon, O spouse,
 [Come] unto me from Lebanon.
 Look from the top of Amana,
 From the top of Shenir and Hermon ;
 From the dens of the lions,
 From the mountains of the leopards.

FROM the queen being here first, and in this section only, called the *bride* or *spouse*, it has been concluded that this section *immediately* follows the consummation of the marriage: but this is by no means certain. Admitting that circumstance to be alluded to, surely it was not improper at two or three days distance; and, as to the word itself, it seems not so properly to express the bride's connexion with her husband, as her relation to his family¹.

It is difficult, and of little importance, to ascertain exactly the mountains here referred to, farther than that they formed the boundaries of the country, and were dangerous to travellers, as being the haunts of wild beasts, and of men

¹ The word *Calah* (כלה), says Mr. Parkhurst, is a term of affection and esteem, used to express the relation of a son's wife to his father and mother, *q. d.* a *perfect one*; so the French call a daughter-in-law *une belle fille*; i. e. a fine daughter. See Gen. xi. 31. 1 Sam. iv. 19, &c. The pronoun *my* is not used with this word in the original.

perhaps little less savage and ferocious¹. The general import of the invitation is, however, sufficiently clear; namely, that the king invites² the bride to his arms, as a place of complete security from all the dangers to which she had been, or might in future be exposed. The envy of her brothers had driven her among the vineyards, which usually were planted in the mountains—her own fears, had made her like a dove hiding in the rocks: but now, secure in the bosom of the wise, the mighty, the puissant Solomon, she might look around with confidence and pleasure, and smile at enemies and dangers.

The application of this sentiment is clear and natural. Where can the church, or the believer, find safety, or happiness, or comfort, but in the arms of her beloved?—Mr. HARMER thinks that the mountains of prey (as the Psalmist calls them³) are here used for the regions of idolatry, of which Egypt was one of the most remarkable.

¹ *Amana* seems to be the same as *Abana*, 2 Kings v. 12. (where the *Keri* reads *Amana*). So the Targum on this place. These were all perhaps different parts of the same ridge of mountains, reaching to a considerable extent, and separating Judea from Syria. Dr. *Blair* remarks, 'Every thing in description should be as marked and particular as possible, in order to imprint on the mind a distinct and complete image. A hill, a river, or a lake rises up more conspicuous to the fancy, when some particular lake, or river, or hill is specified, than when the terms are left general;' and here the learned professor quotes the verses under consideration as examples. Lect. XL. vol. III.

² The Hebrew is not imperative but future.

³ Psal. lxxvi. 4.

And certainly, if Pharaoh's daughter was, as we have all along supposed, a proselyte to the worship of Jehovah, it must be no small comfort and satisfaction to her to reside where that worship was established, and where she could be under no fear of persecution or reproach on account of her religion.

The import of the original word for *spouse* leads us to remarks, *in passim*, that the same act of union which unites us to Christ, the spiritual bridegroom, introduces us also into the family of heaven, and makes us 'sons and daughters of 'the Lord Almighty.' The encomium on the spouse must bring to our recollection *his* infinite grace, who 'loved the church, and gave himself 'for it; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, *not having spot or wrinkle*, or 'any such thing;' but 'that it should be holy, 'and *without blemish*.'

Chap. IV. Ver. 9—11.

Bridegroom. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, [my] spouse,
 Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,
 With one chain of thy neck.
 How beautiful is thy love, my sister, [my] spouse;
 How much more excellent than wine,
 And the odour of thine ointments than all perfumes!
 Thy lips, O spouse, drop [as] the honey-comb;
 Honey and milk are under thy tongue:
 And the odour of thy garments is as the odour of Lebanon.

There is a singularity in this imagery which

has much perplexed the critics, and perhaps it is not possible to ascertain the meaning of the poet beyond a doubt. Supposing the royal bridegroom to have had a *profile*, or side view of his bride in the present instance, only one eye, or one side of her necklace would be observable; yet this charms and overpowers him¹. TERTULIAN mentions a custom in the east, of women unveiling only one eye in conversation, while they keep the other covered: and NIEBUHR mentions a like custom in some parts of Arabia². This brings us to nearly the same interpretation as the above.

Some authors think it necessary to supply a word here, and read 'one glance from thine eyes': and, in the next member of the sentence, instead of one *chain*, 'one turn of thy neck;' and this certainly agrees with the Asi-

¹ So Ainsworth, Harmer, &c. The original for 'thou hast ravished my heart' is but one word (לִבְבוֹתִי), and signifies *unhearsed*, as it is rendered by the LXX. (ἐκπρωσας), Aben Ezra, &c. Some have indeed *attempted* to give a contrary meaning, as, having heartened him, but this is extremely unnatural and inelegant. To skin is to take off the skin; and to embowel, to take out the bowels. When the Queen of Sheba saw King Solomon, there was 'no more spirit in her'—which seems to be a synonymous expression.

² Travels in Arabia, vol. I. p. 262.

³ For אָזַר, masc. the Keri and many MSS. read אָזַר fem. to agree with עַיִן, which has occasioned a suspicion that אָזַר or some such word, may have been dropt from the text in transcribing; Le Clerc and Bp. Percy make no scruple to supply this, and even Junius and Ainsworth suppose it to be understood. The mem מ prefix leans also to this interpretation. Dr. Hodgson reads — 'at once with thine eyes, 'at once with the chain around thy neck.'

atic style, and is not without respectable authorities¹.

Either of these explanations conveys the same general idea, that the slightest view of the spouse was extremely captivating.—The rest of the imagery is as easy and natural as it is beautiful. The comparison of her conversation to milk and honey is most eminently so. ‘Pleasant words are an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.’

These general ideas of the agreeableness of the church to Christ, both in her looks and conversation, having been remarked on in a preceding section, I shall only add here the interpretation of the Targum on the last verse of the paragraph. ‘When the priests pray in the holy court, their lips drop as the honey-comb? and so does thy tongue, O thou modest damsel, when thou deliverest songs and hymns, sweet as milk and honey: and the smell of the priests garments is as the smell of Lebanon².’

¹ Parallel passages might be quoted from many eastern poets. The Song of *Ibrahim* says, ‘One dart from your eyes has pierced through my heart,’ and in the Songs of *Gitagovinda*, we find ‘a slave acknowledging himself bought by a single glance from thine eyes, and a toss of thy disdainful eye-brows.’ *Asiat. Research.* vol. III. p. 400.

² Perfumed garments were a favourite luxury with the ancients. Of the Messiah it is said, ‘All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia.’ (See Prelim. Ess. p. 83.) Nor were they peculiar to the Hebrews. *Homer* relates that Calypso gave Ulysses ‘sweet smelling garments.’

Chap. IV. 12—15.

A garden locked is my sister, [my] spouse ;
 A well locked—a fountain sealed.
 Thy shoots are a paradise of pomegranates,
 Together with the precious fruits of cypresses and nards.
 Spikenard and saffron—calamus and cinnamon—
 With all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes—
 With all the principal aromatics.
 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,
 And streams from Lebanon.

The comparison now drawn has delicate and striking beauties. The bride is here compared to a royal garden—an orchard—a paradise ; her future progeny to a plantation of pomegranates ; and the various excellencies and graces of herself and them to the most precious fruits, and the most fragrant aromatics¹ ; all reserved for the sole entertainment of her beloved.

Then again her purity is compared to a spring, a fountain ; and her fidelity to the spring locked, and the fountain sealed². The latter image may

¹ In this verse I have been compelled by the poetic form of the original to neglect the Masoretic accents ; which I suppose of no great authority. The *fruits* of the cypresses (or *hennas*) and the *nards*, poetically speaking, are their perfumes. The *calamus* is a sweet scented cane, Isa. xliii. 24. Mr. *Swinburne*, in his *Travels through Spain*, (Lett. XII.) speaks of 'the air all around' being perfumed with the effluvia of the 'aloes.'—Most commentators, however, refer this to the wood (*lign aloes*) which when dried is very fragrant. Mr. *Harmer* understands the words 'frankincense, 'myrrh, and aloes' as generic terms, including various species. In the second (myrrh) he supposes may be included a variety of precious *balsams*. On Sol. Song. p. 294, &c.

² I am very tender of altering the established reading, especially where the sense does not require it ; but in the

sound strange to an European ear; but where verdure, vegetation, even life itself depends on such a supply of water, it assumes a very different value; and that fountains, as well as gardens, are locked and sealed in eastern countries, we know on the authority of CHARDIN, and other travellers'.

In the close of the paragraph this image is repeated and enlarged. She is 'a fountain of gardens,' and a stream of 'living waters²;' not only

present instance it should not be concealed, that more than sixty MSS. with the LXX. Syriac, Vulgate, Arabic, and Tigurine versions, instead of (בן) a *well* (a spring built round, with a wheel to draw the water) repeat (גן) 'garden' 'locked;' which is very agreeable to the style of Hebrew poetry, and is preferred by *Castel*, *Doderlein*, and other critics.

¹ *Harmer's Observ.* vol. I. p. 113.

² Dr. *Percy* and Mr. *Harmer* contend strongly that these expressions are a testimony of the bride's virginity on the night of consummation, which was required by the law of Moses; and I admit that the like expressions are used by eastern writers in such a sense. But then it must be remembered that, in an unmarried woman, purity and virginity are precisely the same idea. That this kind of distant imagery is common in the East, and is not restricted as Mr. *Harmer* would have it, appears from the following passages.—Feirouz, a vizier, having divorced his wife upon suspicion of infidelity, her brothers apply for redress in the following figurative terms. 'My lord, we have rented to Feirouz a most delightful garden, a terrestrial paradise; he took possession of it, encompassed with high walls, and planted with the most beautiful trees that bloomed with flowers and fruit: he has broken down the walls, plucked the tender flowers, devoured the finest fruit, and would now restore us this garden, robbed of every thing that contributed to render it delicious when we gave him admission to it.' (*Miscell. of Eastern Learning*, vol. I. p. 12.)—Cahibah, mother of the Khalif Motaz, complained of Salch, that

pure and pleasant in herself, but adapted to communicate blessings all around her; and, in short, to be the mother of a numerous and happy offspring. That this is the clear and established meaning of these metaphors appears, not only from the use of parallel expressions in the eastern poets, and the concurrent testimony of the Jews, but especially from the following passage in the same inspired writer.

‘ Drink waters out of thine own cistern ;
 ‘ And running waters out of thine own well.
 ‘ Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad ;
 ‘ And rivers of waters in the streets.
 ‘ Let them be only thine own,
 ‘ And not a stranger’s with thee.
 ‘ Let thy fountain be blessed ;
 ‘ And rejoice with the WIFE of thy youth¹.

among other crimes he had ‘ *rent her veil*,’ which D’ Herbelot explains of having dishonoured her. (Bib. Orient. p. 644.)—In a famous Persian romance, a princess assures her husband of her fidelity in his absence in these terms: ‘ The jewels of the treasury of secrecy are still the same as they were, and the casket is *sealed* with the same seal.’ (Bahur Danush, vol. III. 65.)

Now the two last instances, relating to married women, cannot be confined to the sense which Mr. Harmer and others have imposed on such terms, it is therefore probable that the other should not be so confined; Solomon’s assertion therefore that the *garden was locked*, and the fountain *sealed*, will not prove that the marriage was yet incomplete, as the hypothesis of Mr. Harmer requires. On the other hand, the language of the author in the first verse of chap. v. appears to me decisive, that the marriage had been consummated.

¹ Prov. v. 15—18. That is, as good Bp. PATRICK (who speaks the general sense of the commentators) paraphra-

The fountain of gardens, and streams from Lebanon, are taken locally by an old writer¹, who fixes the former six miles from Tripoli, and the latter about a mile to the south of Tyre. It is a circumstance, however, of little or no importance. JOSEPHUS tells us that Solomon took great delight in his gardens and fountains of waters², which indeed, with their perfumes, are the grand objects of luxury in eastern countries.

There can be no difficulty in the application of these images, which are often employed by the prophets, particularly ISAIAH.

They consider the world, filled with ignorance and vice, as a wilderness, dry and barren, or

ses the text:—‘Marry; and in a *wife* of thine own enjoy ‘the pleasures thou desirest; and be content with them ‘alone; innocent, chaste and pure pleasures:—Of *whom* ‘thou mayest have a lawful issue, which thou needest not ‘be ashamed to own; but openly produce and send them ‘abroad, like streams from a spring, to serve the public ‘good,’ &c.

So among the modern Jews, the bridegroom offers the following petition: ‘Suffer not a stranger to enter into ‘the *sealed fountain*, that the servant of our loves (*i. e.* the bride) may keep the seed of holiness and purity, and not ‘be barren.’—*Selden’s Uxor Hebraica*, lib. iii. chap. 2.—*Addison’s present State of the Jews*, chap. v.

The same idea of chastity is certainly intended by the ‘garden locked,’ or shut up; on which the TARGUM thus comments: ‘Thy women, which are married to modest ‘men, are as a modest damsel, and as the garden of Eden, ‘into which no man hath power to enter, except the righteous, whose souls are by angels carried into it.’

¹ *Adrichonius Theatrum terræ Sanctæ*, quoted in *Gill*.

² *Josephus*, *Antiq.* lib. viii. chap. 7.

only producing weeds, and thorns, and briars.
But

‘ When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none,
‘ And their tongue faileth for thirst ;
‘ I, JEHOVAH, will hear them.
‘ I, the God of Jacob, will not forsake them.
‘ I will open rivers in high places,
‘ And fountains in the midst of the valleys ;
‘ I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
‘ And the dry land springs of water.
‘ I will plant in the wilderness the cedar,
‘ The shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the olive tree ;
‘ I will set in the desert the fir tree,
‘ The pine and the box tree together¹.’

Such is the power of divine grace, that it can convert weeds and brambles into trees the most choice and beautiful—can make the desert blossom as a rose—and change the wilderness into an Eden—‘ the garden of the Lord.’

Comparing the prophet with King Solomon, we may observe,

1. That the church is a *Garden*—not a Field, or a Common ; she may sing in the language of her favourite poet,

‘ We are a garden wall’d around,
‘ Chosen and made peculiar ground ;
‘ A little spot inclos’d by grace
‘ Out of the world’s wide wilderness.’

WATTS.

2. The church is a garden planted by the hand of God, and watered by his Holy Spirit, which is frequently compared to springs and living streams of water.

¹ Isa. xli. 17—19.

' Like trees of myrrh and spice we stand,
 ' Planted by God the Father's hand;
 ' And all the springs in Sion flow
 ' To make the young plantation grow.

3. The garden is locked; the fountain sealed;
i.e. it is secured from intrusion, and from vio-
 lation. "Holiness unto the Lord," is inscribed
 upon the gate, and these are the mottos of the
seal: 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.'
 And, 'Let every one that nameth the name of
 'Christ depart from iniquity'.

These are hints only dropped for the enlarge-
 ment of the reader at his leisure.

Ch. IV. 16. Ch. V. 1.

Spouse. Awake, O north wind, 'and come, O south!'
 Breathe upon my garden that its aromatics may
 flow out!
 My beloved shall come into his garden,
 And eat his precious fruits.
Bridegroom. I am come into my garden, my sister [my]
 spouse,
 I have gathered my myrrh with my aromatics;
 I have eaten my honey in the comb;
 I have drank my wine with my milk.
To the Com-panions. } Eat, O friends!
 } Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

In the first of these verses two difficulties oc-
 cur:—Who is the speaker? and what is the im-
 port of his invocation? On the former question
 we can derive no light from the original, and the
 critics and commentators are much divided. Sup-

posing the Bridegroom to continue speaking, after describing the bride as a garden of aromatics, &c. he invokes the gale to breathe on this garden, that he may inhale from it the greater fragrantcy; which is not unnatural, nor improper. But conceiving, as I am still inclined to do, the Bride to be the speaker, it forms a part of her reply: as if she had said: 'My beloved compares me to 'a garden, to a paradise; O that I were more 'fruitful and more fragrant; that I might entertain him better with my odours', and my fruits!' This I conceive to be *more* natural, just, and beautiful.

The nature of the invocation has been also disputed, though I think with less reason. If the wind must be invoked, yet why invoke it from opposite points, which certainly could not blow at the same time? True: but they might blow alternately; and were alternately desirable and necessary². The office of the north wind, according to the same poet, was to 'drive away 'rain³;' and, consequently, to produce that clear, brilliant, glowing sky, which the patriarch

¹ For *its* aromatics, the LXX. Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic read *my*; and one of Kennicott's (198) MSS. reads **בשמים** without a pronoun. On the other hand, in the next line, one of his MSS. (145) reads *my* garden, and four of *De Rossi's* appear to have read so. These variations all arose, probably, from the uncertainty of the person speaking.

² If it were thought necessary to obviate the supposed absurdity of calling on opposite winds to blow, it would be easily done by rendering the *vau*, as a disjunctive particle, OR, as it often is by our translators.

³ Prov. xxv. 23.

JOB calls *golden*, and which he tells us comes from that quarter¹. PLINY says, the north is the most healthful wind that blows²; and its bracing, invigorating effects on the human frame are well known: nor is it less important to vegetation; shaking the plants and trees from their very roots, loosening the soil around them, and closing up their pores to prevent their being too much weakened. On the other hand, the south wind is, in its turn, no less desirable and necessary to open their pores and exhale their odours³.

‘Awake thou north; ye southern breezes, rise,
 ‘With silken wings your balmy vapour spread,
 ‘And open ev’ry aromatic bloom.’

MRS. ROWE.

¹ Job xxxvii. 21, 22.

² See *Gill*. in loc.

³ Dr. *Gill* observes that the verb (הפוח) *breathe*, seems to be only in construction with the south wind: and I do not find it ever applied to a violent or tempestuous wind. But the learned *editor* of *Calmet* will not admit the south wind at all in this scene. He says, ‘in Judea, the heat of the south wind would have suffocated the fragrancy of the garden.’ In answer to which it is sufficient to quote an eastern poet in a still warmer climate. ‘O gale, scented with sandal, who breathest love from the regions of the south, be propitious.’ *Asiat. Research*. vol. III.

The geographical situation of Judea will farther justify this interpretation. Lebanon being on the north of Judea, the wind from that quarter would naturally bring with it ‘the odour of Lebanon.’ On the south is Arabia Petræa, and still farther south Arabia Felix. Egypt is situated west of Arabia, and Persia to the east. An old historian quoted by Sir *W. Jones*, [*Essay on the Poetry of the East-erns*] says, ‘The air of Egypt sometimes in summer is like any sweet perfume, and almost suffocates the spirits, caused by the wind that brings the odours of the Arabian spices.’ Now as these odours are brought to Egypt,

Let us now attend to the import of the figure. The wind is in scripture an established emblem of the divine Spirit ! ‘ The wind bloweth where ‘ it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, ‘ but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of ‘ the Spirit.’ The different uses of the wind, may be compared also to the different offices of the Spirit. Is the *north* wind keen, penetrating and powerful ? Such are the operations of the Spirit in conversion. Is the *south* wind mild, gentle, sweet ? Such are the influences of the same Spirit in his teaching and consolations.

‘ Awake, O heavenly wind ! and come,
 ‘ Blow on this garden of perfume :
 ‘ Spirit divine ! descend, and breathe
 ‘ A gracious gale on plants beneath.’

WATTS.

There can be no doubt but the following verse contains the royal bridegroom’s answer, except in the concluding line, which is evidently addressed to his companions—the children of the bride-chamber. ‘ When the propitious gales (says she) have prepared my ‘ garden for his reception, then let my beloved ‘ enter and enjoy it.’—‘ I have already (replies ‘ the beloved) began to taste that happiness. ‘ I am now enjoying, in thy conversation, what

doubtless by the east wind, so they would be carried to Judea by the south, and to Persia by the west or south-west ; in every direction, more or less, producing that excess of fragrantcy that at times over-powers, even the natives, with its sweetness.

‘is sweeter to me than the most fragrant scents,
‘the sweetest viands, or the most refreshing
‘liquors’.’

The-TARGUM on this passage is, ‘The congregation of Israel said, let God my beloved
‘come into the house of the sanctuary, and
‘graciously accept the offerings of his people.’ The holy blessed God said unto his people, the house of Israel; ‘I am come into the
‘house of my sanctuary, which thou hast built
‘for me, O my sister, the congregation of Israel, who art like a modest damsel: I have
‘caused my *Shekinah* to dwell with thee; I have
‘received thy sweet incense, which thou hast
‘made on my account; I have sent fire from
‘heaven, and it hath devoured the burnt offerings, and the holy drink offerings; the libation of the red and white wine is graciously
‘received by me, which the priests pour out
‘upon mine altars.’ This paraphrase, as it respects the Jews, is not to be despised; but that of Bishop HALL is more suited to our dispensation. ‘O my sister, my spouse! I have received those fruits of thine obedience which

¹ That these delicacies, are now, as well as formerly, in the highest esteem in the East, may be seen in Mr. Harmer on this Song, p. 304. It may be worth adding, that the disciples of our Lord, after his resurrection, presented him with a piece of honeycomb, from which he ate, no doubt, the honey, Luke xxiv. 42, 43. So I apprehend here, to eat the honeycomb with honey, is properly to eat the honey in or from the comb. Dr. Taylor, however, in his Concordance, renders the passage, ‘I have caten my pure wood
‘honey with my palm,’ which is supported by good authorities; and the editor of Calmet—‘I eat my liquid honey
‘with my firm honey.’ Continuation, part II. p. 95.

‘ thou offerest unto me, with much joy and pleasure. I have accepted not only of thy good works, but thy endeavours and purposes of holiness, which are as pleasant to me as the honey and the honeycomb.’

The concluding sentence, we have said, appears to be addressed by the bridegroom to his companions, who are invited to rejoice with him, and partake the marriage feast: and is not this fulfilled in the instance of our great Redeemer? Do not all that love him rejoice with him in the prosperity of his church? Yea, is there not joy even among the angels in his presence, over every sinner that repenteth?

But this passage evidently refers to the marriage feast, which was kept open during all the festival. To this we have repeatedly adverted, and shall avoid repetition. But ‘blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ All the enjoyments of the believer here, which are ‘neither few nor small,’ are but the foretastes of what ‘God has prepared’ in a future state ‘for them that love him.’ Here we may drink abundantly of his love and of his consolations, without danger of satiety or excess¹: there we shall drink of the river of his pleasures for evermore!

¹ The original [שכרו דורים] has been rendered by *Mercerus*, ‘Inebriamini amoribus:’ by *Cocceius*, ‘Inebriamini amœnitatibus;’ and by *Ainsworth* and *Gill*, ‘Be drunken —be inebriated, with loves.’ We have observed in the Preliminary Essays, (p. 95 & seq.) that this kind of expression is very common among the religionists of the east, and

SECTION IX.

Chap. V. Ver. 2—8.

Spouse. I slept ; but my heart waked :
 The voice of my beloved, [who was] knocking
 ‘ Open to me, my sister, my consort,
 ‘ My dove my accomplished one ;
 ‘ For my head is filled with dew,
 ‘ And my locks with the drops of the night.
 ‘ I have put off my vest, how shall I put it on ?
 ‘ I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them ?’
 My beloved put forth his hand by the opening [of
 the door,]
 And my bowels were moved for him.
 I rose to open to my beloved ;
 But my hands dropped myrrh, and my fingers li-
 quid myrrh,
 Upon the handles of the lock.
 I open’d to my beloved :
 But my beloved had withdrawn—was gone.
 My soul fainted when he spake :
 I sought him, but could not find him ;
 I called him, but he gave me no answer.
 The watchmen who go round the city found me :
 They smote me—they hurt me :
 The keepers of the walls plucked my veil from me.
 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find
 my beloved—
 What should you tell him ?—That I am sick with
 love.

to the instances there given, I would now add the following.
 ‘ They who walk in the true path, are drowned in the sea
 of mysterious adoration :—they are *inebriated* with the me-
 ‘ lody of amorous complaints,—Through remembrance of
 ‘ God they shun all mankind : they are so enamoured of the
 ‘ cup-bearer that they spill the wine from the cup.’ Sir
W. Jones’s Works, vol. III. p. 372. Quoted from the
 third book of the *Bustan*.

We have already considered a parallel scene in Chapter III. as visionary ; and nothing can be more clear than that this must be considered in the same light. Indeed, the expression, ‘ I slept, ‘ but my heart waked,’ will scarcely admit of any other interpretation ; but, in this view is beautifully poetic. The heart is the seat of the imagination, as well as of the affections ; and this same inspired Poet tells us, speaking of a man of cares and business, ‘ his heart taketh not rest in the ‘ night :’ that is, his anxiety is continued in his dreams, for ‘ a dream,’ he says, ‘ cometh through ‘ the multitude of business.’

This being admitted to be a *dream*, we are as before, relieved from the necessity of accounting for every circumstance on the principle of probability : and farther, as several of the circumstances here are repeated from the former scene, I shall excuse myself from discussing them, and confine my remarks to those particulars in which the accounts differ.

1. In the former instance she sought the beloved—in this he seeks her. It is the same thing in effect, whether the Lord by a secret influence of his grace, stir up our minds to seek him ; or

Eccles. ii. 23. v. iii. A Persian sonnet in the *Divan* of *Jamy* presents us with almost exactly the same image as the royal poet in this song.

‘ Last night, my eyes being closed in sleep, but my good fortune [*query*, genius] awake—

‘ The whole night, the live-long night, the image of my beloved was the companion of my soul.’ *Orient. Collect.* vol. I. p. 187.

whether, by the dispensations of his providence, he *knock*, as it were, at the door of our affections. 'No man cometh unto me, except the Father 'who hath sent me, draw him.'—'Behold I 'stand at the door and knock; if any man open 'unto me, I will come in unto him, and sup with 'him, and he with me.'

2. The Beloved pleads with her for admittance, while she resists his importunity. Let us compare his plea and her excuses. The plea introduced, in analogy to the nature of the poem, is that of a lover exposed to the dews of the night¹; and to give due weight to this plea we ought to know, that the dews in the east are very copious, and the laws of hospitality very strict. The excuses here made imply that the Beloved had a right to admittance; and, consequently, that the marriage was complete. The Jewish custom, as above remarked², satisfactorily accounts for his absence; and the scene being visionary, sufficiently covers all improprieties. In the application of this scene it must be considered as referring to a state of great languor and supineness in the church,

¹ Dr. *Hodgson* thinks Anacreon borrowed from this passage his famous ode, 'In the dead of the night,' &c. It must be owned that there are some striking similarities, and that it is very possible a Septuagint version might have fallen into his hands, as well as into the hands of Theocritus: but as it would be difficult to decide, so the object would hardly pay the investigation. I wish no writers more modern than these had profaned the sacred stories.

² Above, p. 247.

and its members : but what can be the meaning of such excuses ? They are ridiculous in the extreme, and intended to appear such—like the excuses in the gospel. For there is no doubt but lamps were kept burning in the royal harem ; and the loose garments of the east are easily put on : there could be little danger of defiling the feet in treading on a carpet—and there can be no question of the floor being covered. But what lesson can these circumstances be intended to inculcate ? That all our excuses for negligence and disobedience in religion are unfounded and absurd : the pleas of sloth and folly, which increase the evils for which they would apologise. I could go one step farther, and remark, that the excuses here offered are perfectly of an antinomian cast. The church is willing to receive her Lord, if he will force his entrance ; but affects a wonderful delicacy to excuse herself from *exertion*—from rising to let him in.

3. When she is at length overcome by his intreaties, and rises to admit him, alas ! he is withdrawn—the just reward of her indolence and neglect. And thus it is, a state of supineness, and want of circumspection in the church, or a believer, provokes the Lord to withdraw his presence, that we may ‘eat the fruit of our own doings.’ It is by experience that we learn wisdom, and it is sometimes necessary that this should be *dearly bought*, in order that it may be rightly prized. The conduct of the spouse under this disappointment shews that her indifference

was not radical, nor habitual ; but the effect of a temporary stupor, induced perhaps by indulgence. But when she saw his hand, and that he could not reach the lock or bolt to open it, her heart smote her—her bowels were moved within her on his account¹, and she rose directly to admit him : but alas ! it was too late—he had turned away, and was withdrawn.

‘ Still at the door my injured lord attends.
 ‘ While on the lock his busy fingers move :
 ‘ Touch’d with a soft remorse, at last I rise,
 ‘ Fly to the door ; but while with eager haste
 ‘ The fastened lock I search’d, sweet smelling myrrh
 ‘ From every bolt its precious moisture shed ;
 ‘ The rich perfume my lover’s hands had left.’

This poetic version (which is Mrs. ROWE’S) supposes, as commentators do in general, that the perfume here called *liquid myrrh*², proceeded

¹ Instead of (עליו) *for him*, more than 200 MSS. and editions read only עלי. in our margins rendered *in me* ; I doubt however this rendering of the particle, the radical idea of which is *above* or *upon* ; and as the verb (דחמו) is applied to the motion of the sea, I am inclined to think the accurate idea is, that a *tumult* of tenderness and compassion (so to speak) makes the bowels roll *over* and *over*, like the waves, within us.

There is another doubt, however, as to the meaning of this verse ; instead of the beloved’s putting forth his hand to open the lock, some think it means, he *withdrew* his hand from it to go away. [So the LXX ἀπεσείλε—απο (מן) τῆς οὐρῆς ; and Junius—Demiserat manum suam a foramine :] and this was certainly a sufficient cause for alarm : but, I confess this does not appear to me so natural.

² Liquid [עבר current, passing] myrrh. Bochart explains this of the myrrh which of itself *wept* or flowed from the plant—which *Watts* elegantly calls ‘ myrrh new bleeding from the tree ;’ which is always the most precious.

from the moisture of his hands, wet with dew ; and the compliment in this view is very elegant and beautiful, implying that the fragrancy of his body perfumed every thing which came in contact with it. If the perfume, however, be referred to the spouse, I think it will imply, that she had anointed herself with such luxuriancy, that her fingers were still wet with myrrh ; and this would partly account for her reluctancy to rise, since indulgence naturally induces sloth.

The application is not difficult. Ease and indulgence produce languor and negligence in the church, as well as in individuals ; and in such circumstances the Lord often withdraws his presence and his smiles. ‘ He is a God that hideth ‘ himself ;’ and both the church and her particular members have bewailed his absence, as we may see at large in the penitentiary psalms, and the book of Lamentations. ‘ O Lord, my spirit *faileth* : hide not thy face from me, lest I be ‘ like unto them that go down unto the pit’.

‘ My soul with anguish melted when he spoke,
 ‘ And now, with wild distraction sees her guilt ;
 ‘ I call’d in vain, for there was no reply ;
 ‘ In vain I search’d, for he was now withdrawn.’

MRS. ROWE.

4. She seeks him without success, and in great distress and anxiety of mind. It is a very

As to the supposition that she had a pot of myrrh in her hand, which in her hurry she overturned and spilt on the lock, it appears to me puerile, and unnecessary.

awful threatening by the mouth of this inspired writer :

‘ Because I have called, and ye refused,
 ‘ I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded :—
 ‘ I will also laugh at your calamity ;
 ‘ I will mock when your fear cometh¹.’

And though this threat, in its full terror, applies only to the finally impenitent ; yet is it, in a certain extent, applicable to all who refuse to listen to the calls of God in his word and providence. Those who turn a deaf ear to his commands may reasonably expect him to refuse to listen to their petitions. If we trifle with his grace he will withdraw his smiles—he will hide his face in anger till he humble and recover us.

Her disappointment greatly distresses and distracts her. First, her soul failed, or *fainted* at his word² ; but then speedily recovering, she loosely throws her veil over her night dress, and runs after him, like one distracted with love, into the city. This, we are to remember, is a dream ; but there is a harmony in its circumstances, and this conduct sufficiently accounts for her treatment : for

4. When she was found in the streets the watchmen very properly stopt her, drew aside

¹ Prov. i. 24, 26.

² יצאה ברוחו, literally, her soul went out of her at his word—perhaps some cutting parting word. So Mrs. Rowe ;

‘ Tir’d with my cold delay, *farewell*, he cries,
 ‘ Those killing words my fainting soul surprise.

Or the expression may be elliptical—‘ She fainted [at the remembrance of] his word.’ So Gill, and others.

her veil, and insisted on knowing who she was ; but they went farther, and meeting, we may suppose, with no satisfactory answer, they treated her very roughly : they smote, they hurt her. In the parallel vision we have considered the watchmen of Jerusalem as the ministers of the church, and we have no reason here to seek another interpretation. It cannot be denied, however, that in the present instance they are represented as treating the fair stranger with too much roughness and severity ; a hint that may not be without its use, if duly attended to by those whom it concerns. The character of a gospel minister requires firmness and plain dealing ; but not roughness, rudeness, or unnecessary severity.

Lastly, she charges with a message the virgin daughters of Jerusalem, if they should meet with her beloved. This may be considered as a kind of chorus, which, while it makes a poetical conclusion to the vision, leads to the grand object of this section, the description of the beloved ; and appeals from the harshness of the guard to the tenderness of the daughters of Jerusalem.

‘ But you, bright maids of Salem, I adjure
 ‘ By your own chaste affections, if you find
 ‘ My lord, with all your tender eloquence
 ‘ Relate the anguish of my love-sick heart.’

MRS. ROWE.

Ver. 9—16.

Virgins. What is thy beloved more than [another] beloved ?
 O most beautiful of women !
 What is thy beloved more than [another] beloved,
 That so thou dost adjure us ?

Spouse. My beloved is white and ruddy,
 The chief among ten thousand.
 His head is wrought and pure gold :
 His locks are bushy—black as a raven.
 His eyes are like doves by canals of waters—
 Washed in milk—sitting by the full [pool.]
 His cheeks are as beds of aromatics—
 [As] towers of perfumes.
 His lips lilies dropping liquid myrrh :
 His hands, rings of gold set with the tarshish :
 His body, bright ivory covered with sapphires :
 His legs, pillars of marble upon pedestals of gold :
 His aspect, like Lebanon, noble as the cedars :
 His mouth sweetness itself ; yea, he is altogether
 desirable !
 This is my beloved, and this is my friend,
 O ye daughters of Jerusalem.

As the first verse is merely introductory, we shall immediately consider the outlines of the description, which contains the following particulars:

First, his *countenance*, alluding perhaps to that of David when a youth, is said to be white and ruddy¹—beautiful and healthful ; elevated,

¹ *Sadi*, the Persian poet, describing a celestial appearance, says, it was a ' youth whose colour resembled roses sprinkled over pure snow by the playful virgins of Circassia.—' His locks were *black* as ebony.' [*Heron's Letters on Literature*, p. 436.] Again the same writer, describing a young man, says—He had just arrived at the opening blossom of youth, and the down had but newly spread itself over the flower of his cheek. [*Sullivan's Fables from Gulistan*, p. 3.]

brilliant, splendid:—like the standard of an army:—or to drop the figure, he is the chief—the choicest—among ten thousand¹;—His *head*, with the royal crown, is compared to a jewel of gold of immense value²—His *locks* are repre-

¹ ‘The chief among ten thousand!’ I have preserved this rendering, as it is universally allowed to preserve the writer’s general idea. The original term דגול is by most of the translators and critics rendered *vexillatus*, a standard-bearer, or rather one distinguished by a standard—*i. e.* he is distinguished from others by his charms, as much as a commander in chief is distinguished by his standard and attendants.

‘Under his standard marshall’d are
‘Ten thousand youths, but none so fair.’

I know that Mr. Harmer has suggested a different interpretation, namely, that of ‘shone upon by 10,000 lamps;’ but I consider it as unsupported, and far less elegant than the above. I have no objection, however, to adopt the suggestion of the ingenious *editor* of Calmet, [Continuation, p. 114.] who considers the prince as himself the standard, observing that standards were, in the East, a kind of fiery beacon, and quotes Shakespeare’s character of Hotspur to illustrate his idea.

‘His honour stuck upon him, as the sun
‘In the grey vault of heaven; and by *his light*
‘Did all the chivalry of England move
‘To do brave acts.—O wondrous him!’

² There are two words for gold here used—one [כֶּהָם] supposed to mean stamped, or standard, and the other [פֶּזֶז] pure, solid gold. But the former word appears to me to signify gold *wrought* by the hand of the jeweller, (see Prov. xxv. 12.) and particularly in the form of a coronet or ancient crown: thus Psalm xlv. 9. ‘Upon thy right hand ‘did stand the queen in [כֶּהָם] gold of Ophir,’ *i. e.* in a crown of that gold; so in this place I suppose the crown, mentioned in chap. iii. 11. particularly alluded to; and that the expression, stripped of its poetic dress, means simply, that he wore a royal crown, which we know was of pure gold, Ps. xxi. 3.

sented bushy and wavy as the palm tree¹; black and shining as the raven :—His *eyes* are compared to doves by channels of waters—to doves washed with milk—(or milk-white doves) sitting by the full pool, or pools² :—His *cheeks*, covered with their manly down, to a bed, or rather beds, of aromatics; and to towers or vases of smoking perfumes³ :—His *lips* are compared to the su-

¹ So the original word (תלהלים) evidently means, and is thus explained by *Michaelis*. Bp. *Percy* adds, on the authority of a traveller, that, 'the hair may be very aptly compared to the fine wavy young leaves of the palm, on their first bursting forth from the *spatha* or sheaths in which they are contained.' (New Tr. p. 97.) The jettness of the hair sufficiently proves that the former expression of a golden head could not refer to the use of gold dust for powder, which indeed cannot be proved of so high antiquity. Neither could it apply to tinging the complexion with *henna*, because he is described 'as white and ruddy.'

² On examining the original word (אפיקי) translated variously rivers, torrents, waterfalls, &c. I am convinced it means rather *canals*, artificial streams; in order to correspond with which, I supply *pool*, or pools, as several of Kennicott's MSS. I see read, or have read, the adjective (מלאכות) in the plural. In referring this term not to the eyes of the beloved, but to the doves, I follow respectable authorities, as Bps. Patrick and Percy, and Mr. Harmer; and adhere to the oriental style, in a passage already cited (p. 108.) from the *Gitagovinda*, where the poet compares the eyes of his mistress to a pair of water-birds of azure plumage, that sport near a full-blown lotos on a *pool*, in the season of dew! The phrase washed in milk however, I consider as describing the doves as milk-white, which, though not so common as the grey pigeon in the east, were not the less valuable or esteemed.

³ The word *beds* is plural in several MSS. the LXX. *Aquila*, and *Vulgate*; and the word 'cheeks' being plural

perb (red) Syrian lilies, and his conversation to the purest liquid staçte, or myrrh, referring perhaps to the luscious drops distilled from those flowers¹—His *hands* and wrists are richly ornamented with rings of gold².—And his ivory skin covered with a splendid sapphire robe³.—His

seems to require it. There is no doubt but the beard is here alluded to, and compared to a young nursery of aromatics ; but the word rendered ‘ towers ’ is of doubtful interpretation. Mr. *Harmer* (Sol. Song, p. 165) thinks they were vases in such a shape, containing sweet-waters ; but as the word *perfumes* seems to refer, in its use, more particularly to powders, I rather conceive they were a kind of silver pyramids to burn different kind of odours, and which were certainly the most powerful in their fragrantcy. It may be added, in illustration of the former member of this verse, that *Hafiz*, speaking of his cup-bearer, describes his ‘ checks ’ empurpled garden.’—(Nott. p. 35) an image very similar to Solomon’s.

¹ ‘ His lips like lilies : ’ the expression intimates the sweetness of his conversation, and alludes, according to Sir *Tho. Brown*, to the sweet dew-drops observable in the cups of the red lilies, mentioned by *Pliny*, as so much admired in Syria. That the colour, as well as sweetness of these, is referred to, appears probable from the following allusions in oriental writers :—‘ Him whose lips are like a ‘ red lotos in full bloom. ’ (*Asiatic Researches*, vol. iii. p. 392)—‘ How can tulip-coloured wine be compared to the rubies of thy lips ? ’ (*Oriental Col.* vol. II. p. 266.)

² ‘ His hands *rings* : i. e. in the bold eastern style, covered with rings, and the wrists with bracelets. So *Martial* calls a hand ornamented with rings, set with the sardonyx, ‘ sardonychata manus. (Ep. xxv. lib. 2.) And an Indian poet sings, ‘ O my shepherd ! thou art my life : each finger has a ring on every joint, and thy arms have ‘ bracelets. ’ *Orient. Col.* vol. II. p. 399. The antiquity of these ornaments may be seen in 2 Sam. i. 10. &c. The Jews say the *tarshish* was a sea-green : others, that it meant the chrysolite, i. e. gold coloured. The former seems most probable in this place.

³ ‘ His body bright ivory covered, ’ &c. That the spouse could not intend to describe her beloved naked, is to be in-

legs, marbled with health, (perhaps laced with azure ribbons,) and his *feet* in golden sandals, are compared to marble pillars upon pedestals of gold'.—His *aspect* is resembled to Lebanon, and his stature to the cedars².—His *mouth*, that is, his breath, is said to be sweetness itself³; and to sum up all, his whole person is every way admi-

ferred, not only from the laws of decency, but from this circumstance, she describes him that they might know him; besides it is not usual to have the body naked, when the extremities are so richly dressed and ornamented. Nor will the original [מַעֲלָפֶת] bear to be rendered *inlaid* being uniformly applied according to its radical idea to covering over. (Textit. obtextit, Leigh's Crit. Sac.) A sapphire robe over an ivory skin, then, I suppose to be the object of description; and if it be true, as some pretend, that the antient sapphires were spotted with gold, like the starry heavens, no dress can be well conceived more elegant and superb. As to the word [מַעֲלָפֶת] here rendered *body*, and in the preceding chapter *bowels*, Mr. Parkhurst derives it from (מַעַן *Magnah*, in the sense of *lax* loose, which is also the sense of the kindred verb in Arabic. It generally refers to the internal parts, the bowels. &c. (See Gen. xv. 4. xxv. 23. 2 Chron. xxi 15. &c.) but in Dan. ii. 32. speaking of Daniel's image, plainly refers to the external form, and is used, as we often use the word *body*, for the human trunk, exclusive of the extremities.

¹ His legs, pillars of marble: So *Ovid* speaks of marble feet (*marmoreis pedibus*, *Amer.* l. 2. c. 11). But as the same word in the original signifies fine linen, I am by no means sure that this does not also refer to drawers of fine linen, such as the priests wore.

² Bp. *Lowth* observes the elegance and propriety with which the author compares the king to Lebanon for dignity and grandeur, and afterwards the queen to Carmel for grace and beauty.

³ His *mouth*, literally his *palate*, is here evidently put for his breath, which is said to be 'sweetness itself,' or in the Heb. idiom 'sweetnesses.' It may be worthy of remark, for the sake of the allegorical application, that 'It is not un-

rable and desirable. Such I consider as the outline of the description, literally viewed; the inquisitive reader will refer to the notes for my authorities, and others will pass on to the allegorical application, which will be confined to a few hints, selected with great attention, and offered with much diffidence.

The first part of the description naturally reminds us of him who was 'fairer than the children of men,' and higher than the angels;—who was 'lifted up' on the cross for an 'ensign' to 'the Gentiles,' and who is the captain of our salvation—the elect of God, and the head of men and angels.

As the golden *head* of Nebuchadnezzar was designed to represent the glory of his kingdom, so may this part of our description represent the excellency of *his* government, who is King of kings and Lord of lords: whose kingdom is everlasting, and of whose dominion there shall be no end. The *eyes* are the index of the heart; and, in this description, plainly indicate wisdom, purity, gentleness, and love: his lips drop words of love and kindness, and his breath (or spirit) communicates life and healing. The other parts

'usual [among the poets of Persia and Turkey] to allude to the miraculous power of Isa's [Jesus's] breath, which could give health to the infirm, and restore the deceased to life. 'These (allusions) are by no means ironically or irreverently intended.' [Or Col. vol. I. p. 42] Hafiz, for instance, in one of his odes, refers to the breath of the Messiah ('Messiæ halitum habens) which was able to recal the dead to life. *Nott's Odes of Hafiz.* p. 63. note.

of the description must not be too minutely allegorized, as only generally indicating the perfection and elegance of the august person described, whose rank is marked in the splendour of his dress, and the costliness of his ornaments.

The concluding sentence, however, which sums up the whole, merits our more particular attention,—‘He is altogether desirable.’ This may be considered as a summary of the above description. First, he is desirable for the dignity of his person, and the glory of his kingdom, but faintly represented by the most precious gold—pure, permanent, and glorious. Speak we of his array? the sapphire sky is but his robe, and the stars are his gems of royalty. If we review the softer graces of his character,

‘His eyes are glory mix’d with grace,
‘In his delightful, awful face,
‘Sit majesty and gentleness.’

WATTS.

Whenever he speaks, either pleading as our advocate with the Father—or teaching us by the medium of his word,

‘Persuasion dwells upon his charming tongue
‘And eloquence divine.’

The Spirit he breathes on his elect conveys spiritual and eternal life, with all the blessings that accompany it.—In short, his person and character comprize every thing amiable or desirable—whence he is called ‘the desire of all nations’,¹

¹ Hag. ii. 7.

He was the desire of the antient patriarchs: To Adam he was revealed 'as the seed of the woman,' who was to break the serpent's head. Enoch prophesied of his coming in all his glory. Abraham desired to see his day; he saw it and was glad. David rejoiced in spirit when he said, 'The LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.'

ISAIAH 'saw his glory and spake' very frequently 'of him.' MALACHI closed the canon of the Old Testament with the promise of his speedy coming; yea, 'to him give ALL the prophets witness:' and when he came, good old SIMEON was foremost among those who waited for his salvation, and embraced him with rapture.

He was the desire of *all* nations—not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also, and that in two respects; for they had a general expectation of some great deliverer, and (though they knew it not) he was the very Saviour that they wanted. Even SOCRATES was all anxiety, on the grand point of acceptance with God, and advised his pupils to wait for a great unknown teacher then to come¹.

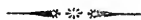
This subject must not close with the cool language of enquiry and observation. The spouse concludes with rapture—'This is MY beloved, and this is MY consort, MY spouse², MY Lord.'

¹ See Historic Defence of Experimental Religion, vol. I. p. 154, &c.

² The word here used is the masculine of that above rendered *consort*.

Reader, let us pause a moment and say, Is this all-desirable Jesus *our* beloved, and *our* friend? If so, we may sing with the sweet evangelical poet, I have so often cited :

‘ All over glorious is my lord ;
 ‘ Must be beloved, and yet ador’d :
 ‘ His worth, if all the nations knew,
 ‘ Sure the whole earth would love him too.’



Chap. VI. Ver. 1—3.

Virgins. Whither is thy beloved gone,
 O most beautiful of women ?
 Whither is thy beloved turned aside ?
 And we will seek him with thee.

Spouse. My beloved is gone down into his garden,
 Unto the beds of aromatics ;
 To feed in his garden, and to gather lilies.
 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine :
 He feedeth among the lilies.

This short passage is encumbered with no difficulties in its literal sense, and may be dismissed with a very brief remark or two.—1. The commendations given to Christ by his church have a tendency to excite the enquiries and affections of others.—2. The spouse concludes her beloved was gone down into his garden, because there she knew was his delight ; for the Lord delights in the plantations of his grace. But neither of these ideas can be better expressed than in the lines of our favourite paraphrast :

‘ When strangers stand, and hear me tell
 ‘ What beauties in my Saviour dwell,
 ‘ Where he is gone they fain would know,
 ‘ That they may seek and love him too.

' My best beloved keeps his throne
 ' On hills of light, in worlds unknown :
 ' But he descends, and shews his face
 ' In the young gardens of his grace.

WATTS

SECTION X.

Chap. VI. Ver. 4—9.

Bridegroom.

Beautiful art thou, my consort, as Tirzah,
 Comely as Jerusalem; formidable as bannered
 [towers.]

Turn away thine eyes from me,
 For they have overcome me:

Thy hair is like a flock of goats
 Which [come up] sleek from Gilead ;
 Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep
 Which ascend from the washing ;
 All of them bearing twins,
 And none of them miscarrying.
 Like the flower of the pomegranate;
 Are thy cheeks behind thy veil.

Threescore queens are they, and fourscore concubines;

And virgins without number.

An only one is my dove, my accomplished one ;

The only one of her mother,

The darling of her that bare her.

The daughters saw her, and they blessed her ;
 The queens and concubines, and they praised her :

' Who is this that looketh forth as the dawn,

' Beautiful as the moon, splendid as the sun,

' And awful as the streamers ?'

THIS passage opens a new scene, and the time is probably the evening. The spouse

seeking her beloved finds him in the gardens, or pleasure grounds, belonging to the palace, and there again receives his commendations.

Tirzab was a royal city, the residence of one of the antient princes of Canaan¹, and afterwards of Jeroboam and his successors. From its name, which signifies *well-pleasing*, it appears to have been famous for the beauty of its situation, or its buildings, and perhaps for both. *Jerusalem*, if not more beautiful, was certainly, as the capital of the kingdom, and the joy of the whole earth, more noble, august, and grand. From the laws of climax we should expect the third image to rise proportionably upon the two former; but its exact import is not easily ascertained. The original term² seems applicable to any object *bannered*; and the antient eastern banners, I suppose, were streamers with pots of fire, in the nature of beacons, on their tops. In the present instance analogy leads us to apply this image to those lofty towers

¹ Josh. xii. 24. 1 Kings xiv. 17. xv.

² נִרְזָב, both here and in ver. 10. some MSS. read נִרְזָב; but as I conceive the two roots נִרְזָב and נִרְזָב to be very near of kin, I suppose the difference unimportant. The radical idea of נִרְזָב I suppose to be borrowed from the solar flame, with a particular reference to its conic form, whence a cluster, a tower, &c. נִרְזָב (with the transposition of one letter) means a standard or streamer; either from its resemblance to a flame, or from a fire kept burning in an iron pot upon its top, especially in the night. [See Harmer's Observations, vol. I. p. 225, &c.] This root has occurred before. See note (1) page 297.

and splendid domes¹ in the East, which were richly gilt and decorated with streamers, and in some parts contained perpetual beacons on their summits. This will preserve the climax, and the harmony of the images, while it presents an object, I presume, not unworthy of the sacred poet. The spouse is represented fair and beautiful as Tirzah—comely, handsome, noble as Jerusalem—brilliant, dazzling, terrible, as the most formidable towers, with flaming spires and streaming banners. And this leads to the true meaning of the next sentence, ‘Turn away thine eyes, for ‘they have overcome me²;’ that is, I am surprised charmed, and conquered by the beauty of thy person, the elegance of thy dress, and splendour of thine ornaments: just as a stranger might be overcome with astonishment, on beholding the beauty and splendour of these cities, and their ornaments. The same idea occurs, though differently expressed, in chap. iv. 9. ‘Thou hast

¹ A fair paraphrast gives, I observe, an interpretation somewhat similar:

‘Should Tirza with its lofty turrets rise,
‘Or Salem’s golden spires the landscape paint,
‘A finer prospect in her face I view.’

MRS. ROWE.

² Few passages have been rendered more variously than this. The sense I have chosen appears to me most agreeable to the context, sufficiently literal, and, beside coinciding with the common translation, has good authorities. LXX. ἀποστρέψον ὀφθαλμοὺς σου ἀπεναντίον μου. *Montanus*: Averte oculos tuos e regione mea: ‘Withdraw thine eyes from my station.’ *i. e.* from looking steadfastly on me.

‘ ravished my heart my sister, my spouse, thou
‘ hast ravished my heart.’

The following lines (verses 6 and 7), are, with the difference of one word, the same as occur in the 4th chapter (ver. 1—3), which has induced some critics rashly to pronounce them an interpolation¹. The ancients, however, and even the modern poets of the East, are not so scrupulous of repetition; and the same rule of criticism would rob us of many other passages in this song—in the Proverbs—and in the Psalms. It is surely not unnatural for a lover to dwell upon the praises of his beloved, or to repeat his commendations.

In the next paragraph, the only question is, What queen and concubines are here referred to? I confess I am unwilling to believe that Solomon had, at this period of his life, formed a numerous seraglio, though afterwards we know it was his sin and folly so to do; on the contrary it seems intimated that at this time she was his *only one*: nor do I think his queens and concubines would have been disposed so to admire and extol a rival. But if we refer this passage to the court and family of Pharaoh, and the compliments his daughter received on setting out for Judea, I think the passage becomes more natural, spirited, and beautiful; and we wholly avoid the difficulty of supposing the author of a sacred allegory so far sunk

¹ These words are in the Septuagint and Targum, though the former, it must be confessed, is not correct, as it omits one clause and adds another.

in luxury and voluptuousness. As to the compliments they use, the last image only is attended with difficulty, and must be referred, I think, to some grand and awful phænomenon in the sky, as being associated with the fairness of the dawn, the beauty of the moon, and the splendour of the sun¹.

¹ How much these comparisons of the spouse to the heavenly bodies are in the style of eastern poetry has been already hinted, and will appear fully by the following quotations.

In Dr. *Balfour's* 'Forms of Herkern' (a collection of Arabian MS. letters, &c.) a lover thus addresses his mistress: 'O moon of the heaven of goodness! O cypress of the garden of affection!' And she replies: 'The moon of my beauty may soon shine from the window; and the tree of my stature may cast its shadow on the terrace.' (See *Mon. Rev.* vol. lxxvi. p. 592.)

The moon is an eastern emblem of chastity, as well as beauty. 'Moon of Canaan' is an epithet their writers usually give to the patriarch Joseph. *Richardson's Specimens of Persian poetry*, p. 434.

A Persian writer says, 'The brightness of thy face is more splendid than the cheek of day.' *Jones's Pers. Gram.* p. 25. And the expression used by our translators, 'clear as the sun,' occurs in *Bahur Danush*, vol. iii. p. 6.

Bp. *Percy*, and some other learned men, have thought that from the stars and planets being called the *hosts* of heaven, that they might be here intended: but they are always designated by a very different word (צבאות) *Sabaoth*. An ingenious critic has lately suggested that a *comet* might possibly be intended, and quotes from *Richardson* the following Arabian verses:

'When I describe your beauty my thoughts are perplexed,
'Whether to compare it
'To the sun, to the moon, or to the *wandering star*.'

This wandering star he supposes also to be a comet, as well as the streamers in our text; but both applications are doubtful, and particularly that of the sacred writer:

Here I divide the section, and would relieve the reader from the dryness of these remarks by a few serious reflections—avoiding as much as possible a repetition of what I have before offered.

1. The church of God is compared to a city, beautifully situated—nobly built—well defended—and elegantly decorated. ‘ Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, the city of the great King.—Walk about Zion, and go round about her ; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ; that ye may tell it to the generation to come’.¹ Yea, the glory of the future state is described by the image of a great and glorious city?

and as the original term is plural, I should rather refer it to the *aurora borealis*, as perfectly corresponding with the epithet ‘ awful’ or terrible, and as well describing the splendour of the spouse, and the awe inspired by her majestic presence.

As, however, I have not at hand evidence that this phenomenon is particularly observable in Judea I have in the comment applied the passage to another object, which, if not so terrifying, is certainly not less sublime and grand—the sun setting behind a crimson cloud, and gleaming between its interstices.

After all, if we must confine the term I have rendered *streamers* to bannered hosts, in a sense strictly literal, I can in some measure account for the connexion of the images from the eastern usage of bearing the images of the heavenly bodies in their standards. Thus the sun behind a lion (*sol in leo*) is the standard of the Great Mogul, and that of the crescent (or half moon) is borne by the followers of Mahomet ; this custom, however could not, I think, be adopted by the Jews themselves, consistent with the Mosaic law, though the Rabbins tell us they made this use of the cherubic figures.

¹ Ps. xlviii. 2, 12. 13.

² Rev. xxi.

—the New Jerusalem above—a city paved with gold—whose walls are precious stones, and her gates pearls. Now these images are certainly used in conformity with our weakness and our prejudices. Pleased with finery, and dazzled with splendour, our little minds conceive of gold, and silver, and precious stones, as the most brilliant objects in creation; whereas they are certainly but faint images of those spiritual and sublime enjoyments which are laid up for us in glory. Imagine a youth to be educated in a subterraneous palace, richly decorated and brilliantly illuminated with a thousand lamps, but totally secluded from the sun-beams. You wish, we will suppose, to give him an idea of the rising and setting sun, and of the charms of nature. You paint the pannels of his room with figures of trees and flowers, and all the charms of a rural landscape—you colour his ceiling blue to describe a cloudless sky, and to represent the sun you gild the cornice with its image: such are our present discoveries of heaven and its enjoyments. But take this secluded youth into the open air—place him on a rising ground—shew him a surrounding prospect of meads, and groves, and gardens—and especially point him to the setting sun on yon mountain—and what must be his astonishment! How much must these objects exceed in beauty and in glory his utmost conceptions in his former confinement? So much as the objects of nature exceed those of art, do spiritual objects exceed those purely natural; and far more will the glories of the heavenly state exceed all the brilliancies of nature.

Many think that the church is compared to a city for her regularity and good discipline, her judicious *police*, if we may so speak ; and we may observe that a chief circumstance which affected the queen of Sheba, So that there was no more spirit in her, was ‘ the sitting (or disposition) of Solomon’s servants, the attendance of ‘ his ministers’,’ &c. So *Theodoret* (addressing the church) says, ‘ They are astonished who behold thy order, there being nothing disorderly, ‘ nothing uncertain or undetermined, nothing confused and indistinct ; but all orderly appointed ‘ and judiciously determined².’

2. Passing over the repeated passage, I remark, that the church in her *prosperity* is the admiration and envy of the world. By her prosperity I do not so much intend her outward glory as her inward purity. In the golden days of primitive christianity, when, in the language of the christian prophet, she was ‘ clothed with the ‘ son,’ how much was she admired ! ‘ See how ‘ these christians love !’ was a proverb among the heathen : but as admiration in base minds always produces envy, so the surprise of the heathen often ended in persecution—they admired, and hated christians. Nor is this a circumstance to be referred only to ages back, or distant countries. The gospel faithfully preached, and succeeded

¹ Kings x. 5.

² See *Patrick* in loc.

with the divine blessing, will produce more or less, the same effects on the lives of its professors, and on the tempers of its enemies. A gracious character will always attract the respect and approbation of spectators; but it will not, of itself, subdue their enmity to holiness; they approve the character, but they hate the person, and his religion.

3. The true church is a singular and distinguished character, she is an *only one*—the only one of her mother and of her beloved. There are many who assume that sacred character, who pretend to love and belong to Christ; but the true church is distinguished by her simplicity, purity, and attachment to her Lord. From this and the like passages, *Cyprian* [Epis. 75] undertakes to prove against the hereticks of his time, the *unity* of the church; and this must be granted if properly explained: but the true unity of the church consists, not in a conformity in rites and ceremonies, and church government: but in being united to Christ the head, and in union of heart and spirit among the members. We have happily proved, in the present day, that there are some in almost all denominations, who, notwithstanding great differences in circumstances, can unite heart and hand, to promote the common cause of christianity.

4. We have the true character of the church with her progressive glory. First, in the patriarchal dispensation, she looked forth as the grey dawn or morning dusk, with some gleams of light

in ancient prophecy ; then under the Mosiac dispensation she acquired the beauty of the *moon*; and as that planet reflects the beams of the sun, cooled and weakened in their effect, so that dispensation presents a faint tho' beautiful image of divine truth. At length, the path of the just like that of the light, shining more and more unto the perfect day, the church was ' clothed with the ' *Sun* of righteousness,' and under the gospel dispensation shines forth in all its splendour. Still proceeding in her course, her light was partially intercepted by the clouds of persecution, and she became like the evening *streamers* of a western sky—shone gloriously in martyrdom and death—and sunk beneath the shades of papal ignorance and superstition, until the glorious morning of the reformation.

The course of an individual believer is like that of the church, considered as a body. First, he receives the dawn of light, in the conviction of his sin and guilt—this light advances in the increase of knowledge, and gradual sanctification, till it assumes the beauty of the moon, and the glory of the sun ; at length clouds arise, and obscure for a time, perhaps, his happiness and comfort, with affliction or persecution :—at length, he finishes his race with glory, like the setting sun ; and sinks into the grave, to arise again in the morning of the resurrection.

Mr. HERVEY considers these emblems in a different point of view¹ He compares the church to the moon in her sanctification, and to the sun

¹ Contemplations on the Night. Note.

in her justification. In the former respect we may well compare her

‘ To the moon
 ‘ Dark in herself, and indigent ; but rich
 ‘ In borrowed lustre from a higher sphere.’

YOUNG.

Nor is the other comparison lest just ; for certainly when clothed with the robes of righteousness, the righteousness of God our Saviour, she may well be compared to the orb of day, for purity and glory. For then JEHOVAH himself sees ‘ no iniquity in Jacob ’—no ‘ per-
 ‘ verseness in Israel ; ’ but pronounces her altogether beautiful and comely, through the comeliness, he puts upon her.

If we thus disjoint the metaphor, and give up the climax, in which I am by no means confident, we may then refer the last metaphor, as I have already hinted, to some more awful and terrifying object ; to the northern-lights for instance, which are sometimes very vivid, and excite great alarm among the vulgar, who imagine to themselves the conflict of ‘ bannered hosts ’ in the sky, and consider them as predictive of terrible wars and revolutions on the earth. Considering believers under this military image, as properly the church *militant*, we may observe that the state here below is a state of perpetual conflict, in which they are supported, and made more than conquerors, through the Captain of of their salvation.

Ch. VI. Ver. 11—13.

Bridegroom. Into the garden of nuts I went down,
 To examine the fruits of the valley :
 To see if the vine budded,
 If the pomegranates blossomed.
 E'er I was aware, my soul placed me
 [As it were] on the chariots of Amminadib.

Virgin 1. Return, return, O Solima,
 Return, return, that we may behold thee.

Virgin 2. What would ye behold in Solima ?

Virgin 1. As it were the chorus of two bands.

In the first lines of this paragraph the Bridegroom, after relating the commendations the spouse had received from her own sex, adds, that when he left her to go alone into his garden, she so occupied his mind, that he instantly as it were turned back, and seeing her at a distance flew to meet her. Then her heart seems to misgive her, and she withdraws, upon which the chorus of virgins calls on her repeatedly to turn again, and wait for his approach.

Such appears to me the general outline of the drama ; but there are difficulties in the meaning of particular words, not so easy to be explained. What for instance was the garden of nuts ? and why go down among the nuts in the valley to examine the vines and pomegranates, which generally grew upon the hills ?

That the word is rightly rendered *nuts*, I am inclined to believe on the authority of the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Targum, and the majority of Jewish as well as Christian exposi-

tors¹. That these grew in the valleys may easily be admitted. It appears also, from authorities produced by Mr. HARMER, that the eastern gardens are generally planted in low situations; for the conveniency of water, and JOSEPHUS tells us that the nut tree (though a curious exotic in that country) flourished in Galilee, near the lake of Genesareth, along with plants of a warmer region². What particular species of nut be here intended, the walnut, the filberd, &c. is hardly worth discussion; but Dr. SHAW, who votes for the former, tells us that these trees begin to be very shady and pleasant by the time the vines blossom.

Whether *Amminadib*³ be taken for the pro-

¹ See *Poli Synop.* and *Gill* in loc. But Mr. *Parkhurst*, following the derivation of the word (גן for אגן), explains it of a garden pruned or cultivated: '*hortus putatos*,' Tremellius: '*Putationis vel tonsionis*, *Jun. Piscator*. See *Castell. Lex. Hept.* in אגן.

² *Joseph. de bell. Jud. lib. iii. chap. 35.* 'The celebrated Song of Ibrahim, says also, 'I went down to admire the beauty of the vines.'

³ This verse is remarkably obscure and doubtful; for, 1. the MS. and versions so vary as to make the reading of the original very doubtful. Twenty MSS. and one edition read (עמינדיב) *Amminadib* in one word: five of these MSS. and two editions, point the word so as to determine it to be the proper name. Many other MSS. read it in one word, with the insertion of a second *yod*, עמינדיב. The most ancient versions also consider it as the name of an individual. LXX, ἄμαξις Ἀμινάδαβ: *Vulgate*, 'Quadrigas Aminadab.' *Tigurize*, 'Currus Aminadib.'—On the other hand, it must be confessed, the general current of the copies both MSS. and printed, runs for the division of this word into two עמי נדיב, 'the chariots of my willing, noble, or princely people.' So

per name of some eminent charioteer, or should be translated, as in our margins, is extremely doubtful. Either way, the meaning seems to be, that the affections of the prince carried him to meet his love with the rapidity of a chariot—the chariot of a warrior, a racer, or a prince. But by what name do the virgins here describe the spouse, and to what do they compare her; They call her the *Shulamite*¹, *the bride of Solomon*, and

Montanus, ‘Quadrigæ populi mei munifici:’ *Pagnius*, ‘Quadrigæ populi mei spontanei:’ *Junius*, ‘Curribus populi mei ingenui:’ *Cocceius*, ‘Curribus populi mei voluntarii.’ Also *Aben Ezra*, *Jarchi*, and other rabbins, as well as Christian expositors.

But 2d. If we could ascertain the reading, there is still a difficulty in the translation. The Hebrew literally reads, ‘I knew not,’ (לֹא יָדַעְתִּי) *i. e.* I was insensible, as it were, at the moment; just as *Paul* says, ‘Whether in the body, or out of the body, I know not; God knoweth.’ (2 Cor. xii. 2—4)—‘My soul set me,’ *i. e.* says *Dr. Hodgson*, ‘My soul placed for me—or my fancy conceived.—My affection transported me,’ says the *editor* of *Calmet*; which, as a paraphrase is very good, but not literal. *Le Clerc* translates it, ‘Non novi quæ anima mea me fecerit instar quadrigarum Hammi-nadibi;’ and *Bp. Percy*, ‘I knew not [the irresolution of] my mind; [which] made me [withdraw swift as] the chariots of Amminadib.’ I might go on; but this is enough to shew the general sense of the text, and the difficulty of being more exact.

¹ The original (השולמית) is evidently equivocal, and I have endeavoured to preserve the ambiguity. It may either be rendered the *Shulamite*, meaning an inhabitant of Jerusalem; or *Solima*, as the feminine of *Solomon* (שלמה), and implying her relation to him. The former, it must be confessed, has the authority of most antient versions and commentators; but the latter, which was suggested by *Menochius* (de Repub. Heb. lib. iii. cap. 21. n. 14), and is countenanced by *Aquila* (who translates the word ἐπιγνευσσας, pacific) is followed by most of the modern translators, par-

compare her to the union of two companies—but whether of dancers, musicians, or warriors, is a question not easily determined. *Mahanaim*¹ may even be a proper name, as well as Amminadib, and still the general idea may be the same—that in *her* were united every captivating charm, and every agreeable qualification.

On the allegory I would offer a few hints, which the reader may reject or improve, as he thinks proper.

1. There is a variety of plants in the Lord's garden—the nut—the vine—the pomegranate. So the prophets speak of cedars and box-trees, firs, and myrtles. And the New Testament writers have taught us to admire a variety in the gifts and graces of the Spirit, as well as in the attainments and experience of believers.

ticularly Bp. *Percy*. The name *Solima* is equally equivocal, being used by *Pope* for Salem or Jerusalem ('Ye nymphs of Solima begin the song'), and as a proper name of females in the east. (See Sir *W. Jones's* Ode, entitled, *Solima*). Mr. *Harmer* prefers the former sense, in order to support his hypothesis of two wives, as he thinks the term not applicable to Pharaoh's daughter; but might it not, even in *his* sense of it, be used to compliment her as now become a citizen of Jerusalem?

¹ This term (חמנים) has led many commentators, both Jewish and Christian, to suppose here an allusion to the history of Jacob, who, when he had a vision of angels, called the place by this name, *Mahanaim*, saying, 'This is God's host,' or rather *camp*. But the word is used for other than military, or even encamped bodies. (See 1 Chron. ix. 18, 19.) Accordingly the LXX read *ως χοροὶ των παρεμβολων*, and the *Vulgate*, 'Nisi choro castrorum.' The word (חור) *chorus*, applies properly to a company of dancers or singers; and the allusion is here probably to the two choruses, or semi-choruses, which accompanied the bride and bridegroom.

2. Christ's plants flourish in an humble situation—in the valley—by the brook side¹. It is in the moist soil of repentance, watered by the influences of the Spirit, that the Christian graces flourish best—that believers grow most rapidly in divine knowledge and experience.

3. The Lord condescends to visit these humble spots : ' Thus saith the high and lofty one, he that inhabiteth eternity, ' to that man will I look, ' that is poor, and contrite, and trembleth at my ' word.'

4. The Lord so tenderly loves his church and people, that he is ever ready to fly to their assistance. The Beloved is represented in the beginning of the section as absent—and long did the church seek him in vain, because she sought him in improper ways. But no sooner does she recollect that he was gone down into his garden, and attempts to seek him there, than (like the father of the prodigal, who saw his son at a great distance, and ran to receive him) he flew to meet the object of his affections with the utmost ardor.

5. Those who truly seek the Lord are sometimes afraid to meet him : their hearts misgive them, and notwithstanding all his promises, they conclude the Lord will not receive such unworthy creatures.

¹ So the LXX render it, *γεννασι τα χειμαρρου*, ' the shoots ' of the brook ;' and the same word in the Heb. (גורל) is both a valley and a stream, because, in the rainy seasons, streams are formed by torrents in the valleys.

6. The bride, the Lamb's wife, bears his name and character upon her. She is a *Shulamite*, an inhabitant of Jerusalem—the city of peace, because the Lord, when he writeth up the people, will record that this and that man, the members of his church, were born there. She is *Solima*, the bride of the true Solomon—the Prince of peace, and therefore (at least in our translation) she bears the name 'Jehovah our righteousness' upon her¹.

7. The church is an object of admiration to all around her. 'What will ye see in the Shulamite?—As it were the chorus of two bands.' Some writers have explained these two bands of the Jews and Gentiles as united in one chorus—One song of praise to God and to the Lamb. Others explain the image of an union and co-operation in their exertions; and one ingenious writer, of a variety of perfections and excellencies, which, though seemingly opposite and inconsistent, unite, harmonize, blend, like two corresponding choirs. Either of these ideas may usefully occupy our meditations, or they may be joined without confusion or absurdity.

¹ Jer. xxxiii. 16.

SECTION XI.

Ch. VII. Ver. 1—9.

1st Virgin. How beautiful are thy feet in sandals,
 O prince's daughter !
 The cincture of thy loins is like jewellery,
 The work of an artist's hands.
 Thy clasp a round goblet, which wanteth not
 mixed wine :
 Thy body a heap of wheat, encompassed with
 lilies.
 Thy breasts are like twin fawns of the roe :
 Thy neck is like a tower of ivory.
 Thine eyes are as the pools in Heshbon,
 By the gate of Bath-rabbim :
 Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon,
 Looking towards Damascus.
 Thy head upon thee is like Carmel,
 And the tresses of thy head like the Porpora.

2d Virgin. The king is detained in the galleries.

Bridegroom. How beautiful and how pleasing art thou, O
 love, for delights !
 This thy stature is like the palm-tree,
 And thy breasts are like [its] clusters.
 I said, I will ascend the palm-tree ;
 I will clasp its branches :
 And thy breasts shall be to me as clusters of
 the vine,
 And the odour of thy breath like citrons.
 Also thy mouth is as the best wine,
 Which is sent to those whom I love for their
 integrity ;
 And causeth the lips of them who are asleep
 to murmur.

Spouse. I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

THE scene here is commonly supposed to be that of the virgins dressing the bride in the morning, in order to receive the bridegroom, who, in

the following verses, is admitted, and compliments the bride anew. But I confess I have my doubts whether the section should not have begun sooner; namely, with the invitation of the chorus, 'Return, O Solima,' &c. Such at least is the division of some critics; but in a matter so doubtful and unimportant, I have followed the majority.

We have already considered the description as referring chiefly to the bride's dress, and in the general I am confident we are right, though I have doubts upon some particulars. How important an article of female ornament the sandals were considered, we learn from the instance of Judith, whose 'sandals ravished the eyes of *Holofernes*'.¹ The 'cincture of thy loins'² was the girdle, fastened with a ruby clasp, which might properly

¹ Judith, ch. xvi. 9. So Lady W. Montague, describing her eastern dress, says her shoes were of white kid leather, *embroidered with gold*. See Harmer's Sol. Song. p. 107.

² 'The *cincture* of thy loins.' This, beside its decency, is more accurate and literal than the vulgar rendering. Mr. Parkhurst (after Harmer) supposes the radical idea of this word (קָמַח) 'to withdraw, retire,' &c. but I conceive the old lexicographers were right in rendering the verb '*circuivit*,' to go round about. So Jer. xxxi. 22. 'How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter?' (Usque quo *circuibis* filia adversatrix?)—The Lord shall create a new thing in the earth, 'a woman shall compass a man:' (*femina circundabit virum*. Pagninus:) where there seems an allusion between the members of the verse, which renders it highly probable, according to the laws of Hebrew *parallelism*, that they are synonymous. So in this Song, chap. v. 6. 'My beloved had withdrawn;' literally was gone round, *i. e.* to the other side of the house. Now, if we are right in the radical idea, the word must here mean, as Cocceius and others have explained it, (περιβραχια, quæ ambiunt femora tua) 'what is girded

be compared to a cup of wine¹. The next part of the dress has been referred to the *vest* em-

‘about thy thighs or loins.’ [See *Leigh's Crit. Sac.* and *Parkhurst* in verbum.] ‘Ambitus femorum tuorum.’ *Buxtorf, Mercerus, Junius.*

The original word for jewellery, חלצים, according to *Parkhurst*, means engraved ornaments; but the particle of comparison (כ) being inserted in the original ‘like jewelled,’ must mean open work or embroidery. The cincture here intended then, is a girdle richly embroidered in imitation of jewellery, or the art of the goldsmith, and probably fastened in the front by a clasp, cut in the form of a covered cup or goblet, and which if cut in a *ruby* would appear a goblet filled with wine. But the chief difficulty rests in the next word, usually rendered navel.

¹ The word *sharer* (שׂרר) certainly signifies *umbilicus*, the navel, and if so taken here, must not be referred to the outward form, but to the use of this part in affording nourishment to the *fetus* in the womb; and in that respect be considered as a cup or goblet filled with wine: if so, this expression is of the same nature with the following, ‘thy body is an heap of wheat,’ both intimating the abundant fertility of the spouse. But as several kindred words derived from the same root are applied to articles of dress or ornament, as (שׂררת) bracelets, or perhaps necklaces, (שׂרר) a breast-plate, (שׂרשר) a chain, or, in short, any ornament round like a ring, or composed of a series of rings:—as several words from the same root are thus applied, *Bp. Patrick, Mr. Harmer, Parkhurst, &c.* have considered this as referring to the clasp of the cincture or girdle, which (according to the radical idea) fastens and *regulates* the whole dress. Now we know that the ladies, in various parts of the east, display their taste in ornaments of this nature, and in particular *Niebuhr* mentions a lady of Alexandria, whose clasp was in the form of two little oval shields, with a flower in the middle. (*Voy. en Arab. tab. xxiv. vol. I.*) Now if the clasp of this royal spouse were made of a ruby, and in the shape of a cup, poetry would very naturally call it a cup of wine. Moreover, because the original word rendered *round* (אֵין) in Chaldee signifies the moon, some of the rabbins have suggested that this may intend the same ornament referred to in *Isa. iii. 18.*—‘round tires like the moon.’

broidered with a wheat-sheaf and with lilies¹; but I rather consider it as a compliment quite in

That the eastern wines are *red*, and that their cups are spherical and highly polished, appears from the following couplet of *Hafez*, [Richardson's Spec. of Persian Poetry.]

' approach, O Sophy, [this] cup which is a pure mirror,
' In order that thou may'st behold [in it] the delightful-
' ness of ruby coloured-wine.'

¹ Bp. *Patrick* considers both the *cup* and the *wheat* encompassed with *lilies*, as figures embroidered on the vest with gold and silver : by the former he understands a bason or fountain in the centre, and by the latter a harvest scene wrought about it, somewhat similar to what *Homer* tells us was wrought by *Vulcan* on the shield of *Achilles*. The late *editor* of *CALMET* has suggested that the comparison here intended is that of the vest (or *boddice*) fastened with a girdle, to a sheaf of wheat tied about with lilies. This is elegant and ingenious, but (supposing the ancients tied their wheat in sheafs) the word here used (ערמה) is not a sheaf, but a *heap* of *naked* wheat, or corn threshed out. (See *Parkhurst* in ערמה, and the texts there referred to.)

But after all, as (בטן) *bitten*, certainly refers primarily to the body, and is often used as synonymous with (רחם) womb. [see Ps. xxii. 9, 10.] I prefer considering this as a compliment to the bride on her fertility. So *Selden* says, 'wheat and barley were among the ancient Hebrews emblems of fertility : and it was usual for standers-by to scatter these grains upon the married couple, with a wish that they might increase and multiply. Perhaps (adds he) the passage in the text is a prediction of the bride's fertility.' [Uxor Hebraica, lib. ii. cap. 15.] A custom which might probably originate from this passage, or vice versa. Either way it offers a happy illustration.

The lilies which surround, or rather cover this wheat, I would refer to a robe of fine linen, pure and white, embroidered perhaps with lilies, which were the most usual ornaments of the Hebrews. When the corn was laid in heaps, I suppose a quantity of field lilies were thrown [Heb. *turned*] over it, to protect it from the birds ; or rather perhaps as Mr. *Arthur Jackson* suggests, in the manner of garlands, as a token of joy ; and to this I suppose the allusion in the text.

the Jewish style, on her expected fertility, her innocence, and purity.—So Mrs. ROWE;

‘ Like summer Harvests fruitful, and as fair

‘ As silver lilies in their snowy pride.’

The neck and bosom are described in nearly the same terms as before¹. The eyes, clear, dark, and full, are compared to the pools in Heshbon²; and her nose, as the index of a strong mind, is compared to the abutment of a tower³. Her head, crowned with flowerets, is compared to

¹ The only observeable difference is, that the neck is here compared to a tower of *ivory*—not that Solomon had such a tower but because her neck was erect like a tower, and white as ivory. So *Anacreon* uses the expression [*ελεφαντίνος τετραχλός*] an *ivory neck*, in describing a handsome person. It may be here recollected that the spouse, chap. i. describes herself as brown or swarthy, but then she says this colour was adventitious, she was sun-burnt; but as her *bosom* might not be thus exposed, that might properly be compared to *ivory*, if not to snow.

² The gate of Bathrabbim was properly one of the gates of Heshbon, which led to Rahbath or Rabba, called a city of waters, perhaps from the pools here referred to. See Numb. xxi. 26. 2 Sam. xii. 27. Jer. xlix. 3. The comparison of the eyes to pools is classical and elegant. So *Philostratus* (as quoted in *Patrick*), says, ‘Thou seemest to carry water, as it were from the fountain of thine eyes, and therefore to be one of the nymphs.’

³ ‘This tower of Lebanon, says Dr. Gill, seems to be ‘one that was built in or near the forest of Lebanon, and ‘was a frontier tower for that part of the country which ‘lay towards Damascus.’ To this tower, with its abutment, is compared a fine well-proportioned human nose, which has always been considered as no small beauty, and, by physiognomists, as the indication of a great mind. *Lavater* says, ‘I have generally considered, the nose as the ‘foundation, or *abutment* of the brain. Whoever is acquainted with the gothic arch, will perfectly understand

*Carmel*¹, and the tresses of her head are rolled up in the spiral form of the *porpura*².

‘ what I mean by this abutment: for upon this the arch of ‘ the forehead rests.’ After describing a good nose he adds, ‘ Such a nose is worth a kingdom.’

¹ Carmel ‘ was a very fruitful mountain, whose top was ‘ covered with vines, corn-fields, and fruitful trees:’ see Isa. xxxv. 2. Amos i. 2. The allusion is to the nuptial crown, or garland, made of flowers, &c. which was worn by the bride on the marriage day: and this may denote the graces of the blessed Spirit, which are an *ornament of grace to the head*, &c. *Gill*.—*Philostratus* (as quoted by Patrick) has the same image, referring to artificial flowers: ‘ Thy head is a ‘ large meadow full of flowers; which are never ‘ wanting in the summer, and disappear not in the winter.’

² ‘ The tresses [Heb. branches] of thine head like the *porpura*.’ On no passage in this song are the critics more divided than on this. Some say ‘ like purple,’ or scarlet; but these are not proper colours for the hair: others refer it to the fillet or hair lace; still the note of comparison is unaccountably redundant.

The *Vulgate* says, like royal-purple bound in the canals; *i. e.* says Mons. *Goguet*, the canals of the dyers, who dyed their wool in little bundles before weaving. The eastern ladies to this day wear their hair tied in a great number of tresses down their backs: so Mess. *Harmer* and *Parkhurst*. Another critic says—‘ like royal purple tied, or hung in ‘ drapery in the galleries.’ Neither of these latter versions, however, can be reconciled to the Jewish punctuation, nor the Septuagint. The late editor of *Calmet* takes *Aragamen* (ארגמן) for a proper name, like Carmel, and thinking it alludes to a particular manner of plaiting the hair, like the weaving of *Arech*, a city in Babylonia, supposed to be famous for its weaving manufactories. This however is all conjecture, and the interpretation of *Michaelis* and Bp. *Percy* is so much more elegant and simple, that I cannot help giving it in every respect the preference. ‘ The tresses of thine head like the ‘*porpura*,’ (or *murex*) a spiral shell fish, whence was extracted the famous purple dye of Tyre: meaning that the tresses were tied up in a spiral or pyramidal form on the top, or at the back of the head, and pro-

The king who is supposed to have been waiting in the galleries, or antichamber¹; is now introduced; and like a bridegroom rejoicing over his bride, extols her charms as in the highest degree captivating and enchanting. He compares her to the palm tree for stature; to the vine for sweetness²; and to the citron for the odour of her breath³. The last verse, if not correctly translated, is at least good sense; and its extreme difficulty will apologize for the rest⁴.

bably the basis of the nuptial crown. Something like this we see in the Chinese, and other eastern dresses; the Hindoo women wear their hair commonly rolled up into a knot or bunch at the back of the head; not to say that our own ladies sometimes roll up their tresses in a manner not very dissimilar.

¹ *Galleries*—on the meaning of this word we have remarked above, p. 201. The king was detained there by the laws of decorum and propriety, till the virgins had properly adorned the bride to receive him.

² Stature like the palm tree. Tallness is an eastern beauty: so *Hafez* speaks of damsels tall as cypresses. The palm tree has this peculiarity, that its branches are all at a considerable height, hence it must be climbed in order to reach them: dates are the clusters of the palm, which, in ver. 8, are changed for grapes, to improve the compliment: and this reminds me of an eastern poet, who compares the breasts of his love, 'ample and ripe,' to the sweet fruit of the ta-a tree. *Gotagovinda*, p. 476.

³ Literally, the odour of thy nose (or as some copies read, *nostrils*) which no doubt intends the breath.

⁴ This last clause has puzzled all the commentators, and cannot, perhaps, be rendered with certainty. The translations are too various to be transcribed, and the conjectures of critics too bold to be adopted. There are also some various readings in the MSS. which only rendered the text more doubtful. After wearying myself in examining them, I have adopted what appears to me the best sense, as well

As I wish to avoid *minutiæ* in the application of the allegory, and as much as possible repetition in my remarks, the improvement of this section will be short, and confined to few particulars. The two first articles naturally remind us of the apostolic admonition to put on the *girdle of truth*, and to have our feet *shod* with 'the preparation of the gospel of peace.' 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings'—the tidings of our salvation! Gospel truths bind the church together like a girdle, and the doctrine of atonement is that central point in which they all unite. Every doctrine of the scriptures is *precious*, but this 'cup of mingled wine' is the *ruby* in its centre. The church is *fruitful* like the corn, and all her children receive their first nourishment from this source—they all 'drink of this cup.'—Her clothing is like the lily—she is arrayed in 'fine linen, *pure and white*, which is 'the righteousness of the saints.' Her bosom is the seat of love and innocence—Her walk erect—and her ornaments the graces of the Spirit.—If the structure of her nose mark the strength of her

as the most faithful version of the text as it now stands, which runs more literally thus: 'Thy palate is as the best wine,' *הוֹלֵךְ לְרוּחִי לַמְּשֻׁרִים*, going to those beloved for uprightnesses; i. e. the wine which I send to those whom 'I particularly esteem for their virtues and integrity.' See chap. i. 4. The last line evidently refers to the intoxicating quality of generous wine, which causeth those who drink freely to mutter, or murmur, in their sleep.

mind, the clearness of her discernment may be expressed by comparing her eyes to the pools in Heshbon. Her head is crowned with the nuptial garland, and her tresses are disposed with the utmost care; so that, upon the whole, in New Testament language, she is 'prepared as a bride' 'adorned for her husband'—and then introduced to him, who was waiting for her in 'the galleries' 'of his grace.' On this I would offer only two or three remarks.

1. That all the beauty and ornaments of the church are to prepare her for her Lord. The graces of the Spirit are not bestowed for our admiration, but for his delight. We are not to seek our happiness in self-enjoyment but in his presence. It should not be the supreme object with us, to be happy and comfortable in ourselves, but to be useful and acceptable in his sight.

2. The Lord 'waiteth to be gracious'—he waiteth to receive his people. When they are prepared he is always ready. 'Behold! I stand' 'at the door and knock.'

3. A third remark will lead to the following part of the section—it respects the different style in which the bride is commended by the virgins, and by her Lord:—they speak with *admiration*, he with *rapture*. 'He that hath' 'the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend' 'of the bridegroom, which standeth and hear-
'eth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the

‘ bridegroom’s voice¹.’ This joy is also fulfilled in the virgins, the companions of the bride; but how far greater is the bridegroom’s joy! yet ‘ as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so ‘ shall thy God, O Zion! rejoice over thee².’

4. The delight which the Lord takes in his people is in the enjoyment of their graces.— ‘ How pleasing art thou, O love! for delights!’ Partly through the cold taste of European composition, and partly through our depraved nature, which carnalizes every thing, these expressions may seem extravagant, and even licentious; but strip off the figurative dress, and you have such solid truths as these: that God himself, being supreme excellence, must love himself supremely; and his creatures as they resemble him: that as the supreme beauty is moral excellence, so God’s supreme delight is in holiness and purity: a sinner therefore can only be with him an object of complacency, as viewed in the Saviour: and the more of the image of Christ and the graces of his Spirit appear on his people, the more amiable are they in his sight.

Again, as our happiness depends only on conformity to the Most High, and communion with him, if he love us, he will display that love by assimilating us to himself, and drawing us into communion with him: ‘ For whom he did fore-know, them he also did predestinate to be con-formed to the image of his Son.’

¹ John iii. 29.

² Isa. lxii. 5.

5. The last verse, which contains the reply of the spouse, is partly a repetition, and so far has been considered already. The concluding phrase expresses either her subjection to her husband, as the Hebrew commentators say, or rather his affections to her, as it is said in the 45th psalm — ‘ So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.’

SECTION XII.

Ver. 11—13.

Spouse. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field,
 Let us lodge in the villages.
 We shall be ready for the vineyards,
 We shall see whether the vine flourish,
 [Whether] the tender bud open,
 [Or] the pomegranate blossom.
 There will I grant thee my affections.
 The mandrakes yield their odour,
 And over our gates are all precious fruits,
 Both new and old,
 [Which] my beloved, I have reserved for thee.

In the former parts of this song the queen discovers a decided partiality for rural scenery, and a country life; and these verses contain a proposal to spend the following night at some *villa*, a little distance from the metropolis, where she had provided an entertainment for her lord, consisting of things new and old; that is, not only of the earliest productions of the season, but the most curious *preserves*, which probably had been brought from Egypt, and kept for this

occasion. As to the mandrakes, it is indeed doubted what particular fruit they may intend; but most probably, from the contest of Leah and Rachel about them, something very rare, and supposed to excite love¹.

Applying these words to the spiritual bride we may remark, 1. That the love of retirement is often the character of a pious mind—of a mind devoted to meditation and prayer, and to converse with the Creator in his works. On the other hand, when the mind is strongly attached to the parade and bustle of populous cities, it indicates a love to vanity, and a disinclination to commune either with our own hearts, or with our God.

2. The getting up early to observe the progress of nature, shews a diligence highly ornamental to the Christian character, and a taste honourable to its possessor. Men of elegant taste and elevated minds prefer these objects; and it is certainly the mark of a groveling mind and a mean understanding, either to take delight only in getting money, or in spending it in the vain and wicked amusements of a city. Happy is the

¹ DUDAİM, *mandrakes*: So the LXX. (who translate דודאים, *Mandragoras*) Onkelos, and most critics and commentators. *Hasselquist* (*Voyages*, p. 160) found a great number of these plants near Galilee, which were ripe in May, and, with other travellers and naturalists, describes it as of a strong nauseous smell, and not good to eat; but then as a Samaritan priest told Mandrell, they were supposed to help conception by being laid under the bed. However, the editor of Calmet is confident that the *dudaïm* were melons.

man whose duty and circumstances permit him at least occasionally, to go forth into the field and to lodge in the villages ; and not merely to lodge there ; but who rises early to enjoy the sweets of morn ; and not to enjoy them only but to improve them by meditation and reflection, without which, indeed, he can hardly be said to enjoy them.

3. A Christian father, *Theodore*, derives hence a very useful hint on the duty of ministers to propagate the gospel, among the heathen, and to watch its effects where it has been already propagated. ‘ Let us (says he) take care of the meanest and most abject souls, who have lain long neglected, which are tropically called fields and villages.’ And again it behoves us to use all suitable diligence in visiting those who have already received the word, whether they bring forth more than leaves ; and especially whether any beginnings (*buds*) of charity (or love) appear among them¹.

4. The expression, ‘ There will I grant thee my affections, may imply that prayer and meditation, accompanied with a diligent attention to our respective duties, are the ways in which we shall best discover our attachment to our divine beloved.

¹ See *Patrick* in loc.

Chap. VIII. 1—4.

Spouse. O that thou wert as my brother,
 That sucked the breasts of my mother !
 Should I find thee in the street,
 I would kiss thee, and not be despised.
 I would carry thee, I would bring thee
 Into the house of my mother, who would instruct
 me ;
 I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine,
 Of the new wine of my pomegranates.

[*To the Virgins.*]

His left hand is under my head,
 And his right hand embraceth me.
 I adjure ye, O daughters of Jerusalem—
 Why should ye disturb, or why awake
 The lovely one, until it please [him ?]

This passage I consider as the continuation of the preceding conversation. The spouse had invited the beloved to partake an entertainment she had provided for him in an adjacent village, where she promises to give every proof of her affection. But here the modesty of her sex seems to check the expression of her attachment, and she suggests a wish that her relation to him were rather that of an infant brother than a husband ; that she might be at liberty to express her affection in the strongest and most public manner, without incurring the charge of forwardness, or indecorum¹.

She then anticipates such a scene, and supposes herself in his embraces, as in a former sec-

¹ ' I would kiss thee, and not be despised.' Literally, ' and *they* [*i. e.* spectators] would not despise me ;' but for *me* (ו) five MSS. and two editions read (לך) *thee*, and two other MSS. (לו) *him*.

tion; on which I would only remark here, the wish that her relation to Solomon were of the nature I have stated, farther precludes the possibility of any indelicacy in the ideas of the writer, in the chorus, which is here repeated to conclude the section¹.

One expression in this short paragraph is indeed doubtful from an ambiguity of the original, which instead of 'who would instruct me' might be rendered, 'thou shouldst instruct me²;' and I confess I have some hesitation which to prefer, as the authorities are pretty equally divided.

¹ There is a material difference, however, in the expression. Instead of [אם] 'if ye awake,' &c. as in chap. ii. 7. iii. 5. it is here put interrogatively—'Why should ye disturb?—Why should you awake?' &c. Five MSS. indeed add, 'by the antelopes, and by the hinds of the field;' which words are also read in the Arabic and Alexandrian copy of the LXX; but the Vatican LXX. adds only, 'by the hinds of the field,' which makes it probable these words are borrowed from the former passages. About one hundred MSS. prefix a *vau* to the word *head*, but I think very unaccountably.

² The verb (תלמדי) being here the future in *pihel* (as the Jewish grammarians call it) may either be the third person feminine, 'she would teach, or as the second masculine, thou 'shouldst teach;' but Dr. Hodgson and the editor of Calmet render *Talmudni* as the proper name of the queen's mother, though I conceive without sufficient reason.

The LXX. here introduce a clause from chap. iii. 4, and Mr. Green, who transposes the second verb, reads the passage thus,

- 'I would lead thee into the house of my mother,
- 'I would bring thee into the apartment of her that conceived me,
- 'That thou mightest be my guide.'

but I confess I am Jealous of mere *conjectural emendations*.

If the teaching here mentioned be referred to the mother, the question occurs, 'In what would she instruct her daughter?' and the answer is, 'In the duties of her new relation;' but if the verb be taken in the second person, as I am much inclined to admit, the expression must be understood more generally, 'thou shouldst instruct me,' *i. e.* be my preceptor.

The spiced wine is thought to allude to a custom of the parties drinking wine from the same cup in one part of the marriage ceremony, and we know that spiced wine was a great delicacy in the east¹.

In the allegorical application of these verses we may observe,

1. That believers wish to enjoy the most intimate relation to, and communion with their Lord.

¹ Spiced wines were not peculiar to the Jews. 'Hafiz speaks of wine "richly bitter, richly sweet." The Romans lined their vessels (*amphoræ*) with odorous gums, to give the wine a warm bitter flavour, and it is said the Poles and Spaniards have a similar method to give their wines a favourite relish'. *Nott's Odes of Hafiz*, note. p. 30.

The word (עֵסֶת), rendered by our translators *juice*, is properly 'new wine,' or *must*: and the new wine of pomegranates is, 'either new wine acidulated with the juice of pomegranates, which the Turks about Aleppo still mix with their dishes for this purpose; or rather wine made of the juice of pomegranates, of which Sir J. Chardin says they still make considerable quantities in the east.' See *Harmer's Observations*, vol. I. p. 377, 8.
[For רמנים many MSS. read רמנים or רמנים.]

‘ O could I call thee by a brother’s name,
 ‘ that tender title would indulge my bliss !’

Happily we may do this : since our gracious Redeemer hath partaken of our flesh and of our blood, ‘ he is not ashamed to call us brethren,’ while he fulfils all the tenderness and affection implied in the character of a brother.

2. It becomes the disciples of Jesus to avow their attachment to him in the most decided and public manner. They may kiss him and not be ashamed ; because, (1.) There is no treachery in the kiss : they do not say, as Judas did, ‘ Hail Master !’ and betray him.—(2.) There is no unseemliness in the freedom—it is an ‘ holy kiss,’ and becomes a saint. The attachment of a believer to his Lord must be (like the weapons of his warfare) not carnal, but spiritual : not temporal, but divine.

3. That reverend familiarity which accompanies true piety is not only distinct but *distant* from the pertness and presumption of hypocrites and enthusiasts ; and therefore not to ‘ be despised.’

4. When the church is instructed, the Lord is entertained : his delight is in them that fear him ; and when they frequent his house for instruction, and meet him at his table, it is to him, as well as them, ‘ a feast of fat things—of wine on the lees ‘ well refined.’—‘ Behold, I stand at the door and ‘ knock ! If any man hear my voice, and open ‘ the door, I will come in to him, and will *sup*
 ‘ *with him*, and he *with me*.’

5. It should be our concern, when we go to the Lord's house, not only that we meet him there, but that his 'presence go up with us.'

' I bring him to my mother's home :
' Nor does my Lord refuse to come
' To Sion's sacred chambers, where
' My soul first drew the vital air.

' He gives me there his bleeding heart,
' Pierc'd for my sake with deadly smart ;
' I give my soul to him, and there
' Our loves their mutual token share.'

WATTS.

Lastly, I would conclude these hints by a quotation from the TARGUM on this passage, which is express to our purpose, and too remarkable to be omitted: 'When the King MESSIAH shall be revealed unto the congregation of Israel, the children of Israel shall say unto him "Be thou with us for a brother, and let us go up to Jerusalem, and let us suck with thee the senses of the law, as a sucking child sucketh the breasts of its mother," &c.—And on verse 2. the same paraphrase adds, 'I will lead thee, O King Messiah, and bring thee to the house of my sanctuary; and thou shalt teach me to fear the Lord, and to walk in his paths, and there will we keep the feast of Leviathan, and drink old wine,' &c. Though some expressions here allude to the dreams of the rabbins, as to the carnal enjoyments of Messiah's kingdom, they are sufficient to shew that their fathers had been accustomed as before remarked, to refer this book to the Messiah, without scruple or hesitation.

SECTION XIII.

Chap. VIII. Ver. 5—7.

Virgins. Who is this that came up from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved ?

Bridegroom.

Under the citron tree I courted thee ;
There thy mother plighted thee unto me,
[Even] there she that bear thee plighted thee,
unto me.

Spouse. Place me as a signet upon thine heart,
As a signet upon thine arm :
For love is strong as death ;
Jealousy is cruel as the grave ;
The darts thereof are darts of fire,
Which have the fiery flame of JAH.

Bridegroom.

Many waters cannot quench love ;
Neither can the floods drown it.
If a man would give all the substance of his
house for love,
It would utterly be contemned.

THIS Section begins with a question from the virgins, alluding, I conceive, to the spouse's coming up from Egypt, which lay beyond the wilderness ; here Solomon probably met her, and they might enter Jerusalem together in the royal palanquin, (see ch. iii. 6.) when she would naturally lean toward, or upon, her beloved¹ I conceive also,

¹ The word (מִתְרַבֶּצֶת) *leaning* occurs only in this place, and is very differently translated. Many of the rabbins rendered it associating, joining, cleaving, from the use of a kindred word in Arabic : so the editor of Calmet, 'in sociability with her beloved.' 2. Others '*rejoicing with her beloved*,' to which incline the Vulgate and the Targum. 3. The LXX read (ἐπιστήριζουσα) '*strengthening*' (i. e. supporting) herself on her beloved. 4. Our version and many others read *leaning on her beloved*, which appears to be the sense of the word in Ethiopic. [See Gill in loc.] I con-

with Mr. HARMER and others, that the answer of the bridegroom¹ refers to the scene in ch. ii. 3. 'I sat under his shadow (comparing the beloved to a citron tree) with *great* delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.' Here we may suppose her mother to have been present, and some ceremony to have taken place, which is here alluded to.

The following lines appear to me to contain the reply of the spouse, desiring a constant memorial on his arm², and in his heart; but for the sake of keeping up the conversation, I have referred the seventh verse to the bridegroom.

The comparison of the fire of jealousy to the flame of God is commonly referred to lightning; but I conceive alludes more directly to the sacrificial flame³, which was inextinguishable, while the divine presence continued in the temple.

fess I consider this (as many other verbs of three radicals) as a compound verb from *רח* to lean, bend, and *פק* to stagger; i. e. to lean for support, like one who staggers.

¹ 'Under the citron tree.' All the Greek fathers, and many of the Latin, attribute these words to the bridegroom, to whom they seem most naturally to belong; but the Jews having pointed *thee* masculine, persist in attributing them to the spouse. The verbs in this verse have been much controverted; the sense I have given appears to me natural and just; but for the sense of the several roots I must refer to the lexicons; particularly *Parkhurst* in *חבל*. Nearly one hundred and twenty MSS. and some editions prefix a *vau* emphatic to the last line of the 5th verse—'Even there.' &c.

² Here I conceive the masculine point affixed by the Masoreths to the pronoun *thine* is right.

³ 'The fiery flame of *JAH*.' More than 200 MSS. and many editions, read this in two separate words [*שלהבת ית*] as I have rendered them; and as the sacrificial fire never

On this section we may note,

1. That in the present state the church is coming up out of the wilderness.—It is common with the inspired and other writers to represent the present life as a wilderness or desert, *i. e.* a state of distress and trial, and our passage through life as a journey through, or a coming up out of this wilderness; in allusion to the passage of the Israelites through the wilderness to the promised land. But here it is said she came up ‘leaning on her beloved’—which very properly represents the affiance and dependance we should place on the divine providence and grace all through our mortal pilgrimage.

2. ‘The Lord excites, as well as rewards, the affections of his people: indeed he answers and rewards no affections but those which he excites: ‘Under the citron tree I courted thee.’

‘Look gently down, Almighty grace;
‘Prison me round in thine embrace;
‘Pity the soul that would be thine,
‘And let thy power my love confine.’

WATTS.

was to go out, (see Levit. vi. 12.) so the Jews have a tradition, which appears well founded, that no rains ever could extinguish it. Some of the ideas in the Song of Ibraham, repeatedly quoted above, are remarkably similar to those in Solomon.

‘I die—I go down to the grave;
‘My heart is hot as sulphur.’

3. The church considered as the mother of believers (for 'Jerusalem which is above is the 'mother of us all') has solemnly pledged her children unto Christ, and dedicated them to his service. This idea is particularly applicable to the peculiar ordinances of the gospel, baptism and the Lord's supper, in both which we are solemnly dedicated to his service: but should not be confined to them; for in every circumstance or situation, and by every possible tie, we are the Lord's and in no respect our own.

4. The love between Christ and his people is victorious and irresistible as death; and jealousy on the part of the believer is severe and cruel as the grave. Its darts or arrows (alluding to the 'fiery arrows' of the antients) are darts of fire which have a most vehement and inextinguishable flame. The love of Christ infixed in the heart, enkindles and burns there till it consumes the lusts, and purifies the passions of the human heart. MAXIMUS TYRIUS says of a mortal love, 'Wild beasts are not terrible to it, nor fire, nor precipices, nor the sword, nor the halber,' &c. But Paul speaks much more sublimely of divine love: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither

‘ death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,
 ‘ nor powers, nor things present, nor things to
 ‘ come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other
 ‘ creature, shall be able to separate us from the
 ‘ love of God which is in Christ Jesus.’

5. This love is unmerited and inextinguishable—It is *unmerited*: ‘ If a man would give all
 ‘ the substance of his house for love, it would
 ‘ utterly be condemned.’—It is *inextinguishable*:
 ‘ Many waters cannot quench love, neither can
 ‘ the floods drown it.’ So PHILOSTRATUS,
 speaking of love, says, ‘ What new kind of con-
 ‘ flagration is this? I am ready to call for water,
 ‘ but there is none to bring it; for a quencher,
 ‘ but a quencher for this fire cannot be found. If
 ‘ one bring it from the fountain, or take it out of
 ‘ the river, it is all the same; the water itself is
 ‘ burnt up by love.’

6. It is the first and supreme desire of the
 believer to be remembered by the Lord—to en-
 joy the affections of his heart, and the protection
 of his hand; and the Lord has graciously assured
 his church, ‘ I have engraven thee on the palms
 ‘ of my hands: thy walls [the walls of Jerusalem]
 ‘ are continually before me.’

SECTION XIV. [*Evening.*]

Chap. VIII. Ver. 8—10.

Spouse. We have a sister who is little, and her breasts
are not [grown ;]
What shall we do for our sister in the day that
she is spoken for ?

Bridegroom. If she be a wall, we will build on her turrets of
silver ;
If she be a door, we will enclose her with boards
of cedar.

Spouse. I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers :
Thence was I in his eyes as one that findeth
peace.

THE first verse of this paragraph Mr. HARMER considers as the language of Solomon's former Jewish wife, provoked to Jealousy by his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, whom she represents as little, and too young for her station : but this is highly inconsistent with what is said of her stature, portliness, and corpulency, which are repeatedly commended in the course of the poem. I therefore conceive the allusion to be literally to a younger sister of the queen, for whom she wishes Solomon to make some provision, perhaps by recommending her in due time to one of the neighbouring princes, his allies or tributaries : and this is what I suppose him to promise in his reply. ' If she be a wall,' if she be adapted to rear and support a family, we will provide for her in marriage, that she may bear an offspring like turrets of silver ; it being usual to erect a number of turrets or little towers upon the walls of cities, for the various purposes of ornament, observation and

defence. So the Psalmist, ‘ Walk about Zion, and go round about her ; tell the towers thereof. ‘ Mark ye well her bulwarks, and consider her ‘ palaces.’—Or perhaps here a promise may be intimated of a handsome dowry, which, to be paid in silver, would form a mass like a tower or palace¹.

If she be a door,’ that is, if she be capable of bearing children, she shall be honoured like the door of a palace ; she shall bring forth a royal offspring, and thus shall she be provided for in a manner suitable to her rank and circumstances : her virtue shall be honoured and respected.

Christian interpreters have unanimously applied the character of this little sister to the Gentile church, which may be called the *sister* of the Jewish, with at least as much propriety, as Sodom and Samaria are called sisters of Jerusalem². And she was a *younger* sister, because at this time, and even for several ages afterward, she was not arrived to maturity ; though under the the gospel they become “ fellow heirs,” and are united in the same privileges. Nor is it of any weight that the Gentiles were not at this time a church, since He who ‘ seeth the end from the

¹ Mr *Harmer* (p. 358) explains the terms *wall* and *door*. as implying that the alliance between Solomon and Pharaoh’s daughter would be a defence to Judea, and open a more familiar intercourse between that country and Egypt ; and I would not deny but these ideas might be expressed under those metaphors, though I have preferred another illucidation.

² Ezek. xvi. 46.

‘beginning,’ ‘callethe the things that are not as ‘if they were.’ So he hath said, ‘Other sheep ‘have I which are not of this fold,’ when as yet those sheep had no existence, at least under the character of sheep.

The situation of this sister church is, that she was little and immature, but when the period arrived that she should be spoken for in marriage, *i. e.* when the fulness of time came for the calling of the Gentiles, then was she to be provided for in a manner suitable to her circumstances. The Gentile church is a wall, and hath been adorned with innumerable turrets—turrets of silver. It is said of the new Jerusalem, that it hath twelve foundations, bearing the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; and the like may be said of these turrets; they bear the names of evangelists and apostles and the first preachers of the gospel; the watchmen upon the walls of this spiritual city.

The Gentile church may be considered as a door—an open door—a door open night and day, admitting on every side inhabitants to the celestial city. Or if the term imply, as I have supposed, that she was to be a mother, the portico of cedar may imply that she was to be the mother of a noble or royal offspring, and to have an establishment suitable to her rank.

But how will any of these remarks apply to the case of individual believers? or what useful lessons or observations do they suggest?

1. The Lord bestows whatever he requires. When he calls the Gentiles to be a church, he furnishes them with all the requisite gifts and graces ; and when he calls a sinner by his grace, he gives him grace to come. 'The same voice that says, ' Arise and walk,' gives strength and ability to obey.

2. Our divine Benefactor suits his blessings to our circumstances. The wall he crowns with towers, and incloses the door with pannels. To the weak he gives strength, to the poor wealth, and to the deformed beauty.

3. 'The Lord's blessings are worthy of himself. If he erects turrets, they are of silver ; if he cases a door, it is with boards of cedar. But O, what metaphors can describe the dignity and excellence of the blessings of his grace !

But we must consider the reply of the Jewish church, she was already matured, already married : she was ' a wall, and her breasts like towers : ' thence was she acceptable in his eyes, as one that findeth peace, *i. e.* perhaps, as a peace-maker—as one that findeth means of restoring peace and harmony, in the close of a long, expensive, and sanguinary war.

To this place I have deferred a remark or two on the breasts of the church, which have been often alluded to and described in the course of this poem.

1. The truths of the gospel are as nourishing to the soul as mothers' milk to their infant offspring.

‘ Therefore as new-born babes desire the sincere
‘ milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.’

2. The consolations of God are neither few nor small. ‘ As a son is comforted of his mother, ‘ so shall thy God comfort thee.’ Behold the helpless babe ! what can support him like the bosom of his mother ? Look at him afflicted with disease ! What can comfort him like his mother’s milk ? And so kind, so tender, so comforting, so nourishing, are the consolations of the gospel ! How appropriate to every case of human misery ! How healing and consolatory to every mortal woe !

Chap. VIII. Ver. 11—14.

Spouse, (to the Virgin)

Solomon hath a vineyard at Baal-hamon :
He hath let the vineyard to keepers,
Each shall bring for the fruit thereof a thousand silverlings.

To the bridegroom.

My own vineyard is before me ;
A thousand to thee O Solomon !
And two hundred to the keepers of its fruits.

Bridegroom. O thou who inhabitest the gardens,
The companions listen to thy voice,
Cause me to hear it !

Spouse.

Haste thee, my beloved,
And be thou like an antelope, or a young heart,
Upon the craggy mountains.

I can trace no connexion between the preceding paragraph and this, but on a supposition that the former has some reference to the dowry of the bride’s sister, as above hinted. Then there

is a propriety in mentioning the dowry of the spouse, namely, the city of Gezer, Gaza, or Gazara, and the surrounding country, which was well situated for vineyards, as remarked in our preliminary dissertations¹. For though the dowries were more usually given by the husband, it appears in certain instances, of which this is one, they were received from other quarters.—This spot she compares to *Baal-hamon*, where Solomon had a vineyard farmed out to keepers², *each* of whom, it should seem, paid in a net revenue of a thousand silverlings.

By the expression ‘my own vineyard is before me,’ commentators understand that the

¹ Pag. 64.

² These silverlings, or pieces of silver, are supposed to be *shekels*, value about 2*s.* 4*d.* each. Supposing (as tradition does) the vineyard to have been divided among ten farmers, the whole annual revenue must have been about 1,200*l.* sterling. But as the original (שׂא) is equivocal, it may be rendered either distributively, each, (‘*quisque*,’ *Pagninus*) or emphatically ‘the man’ (LXX. *αὐτὸς*) *i. e.* as the editor of Calmêt explains it ‘the tenant’) the principal or head *man*. I have preferred the former, because I find it was common to divide these grounds into plantations of a thousand vines, each worth a thousand silverlings; (Is. vii. 23.) and because I conceive one of these would have been too inconsiderable for a royal vineyard.

The situation of *Baal-hamon* is very doubtful: Mr. HARMER places it at Balbec; but most commentators, (I believe without authority) near Jerusalem. The name seems to imply an heathen origin, and some are confident an Egyptian one; though others think it simply implies the populousness of the city—*Baal-hamon* literally meaning ‘the Lord of a multitude.’

spouse paid a personal attention to her vine-yard, (as having been formerly a keeper of the vineyards¹) and delighted in residing there, which the bridegroom appears to allude to, when he calls 'her an inhabitant of the gardens,' and expresses a desire for her constant presence: this desire is re-echoed by the chorus in the person of the spouse, and concludes the poem.

In what manner, and how far, this part of the song must be allegorized, is indeed a question of some difficulty.

The Jewish doctors say, particularly MAIMONIDES, 'Wherever you meet with the name '*Solomon* in the book of Canticles, it is *holy*, '[i. e. 'belongs to the Messiah] except in that place "a thousand to thee, O Solomon!" which is the text before us. Their idea seems to be, that a comparison is here intended between some vineyard literally understood, and the spiritual vineyard, the church of God.—Bp. PATRICK draws the parallel between the vineyard of Solomon in Baal-hamon, and that of the spouse, to the disadvantage of the former; as if she had said, If Solomon makes so great a profit of a vineyard which he intrusts to keepers, how much more gain shall I reap from mine, under my immediate inspection?

But the difficulty is, how shall these vineyards be distinguished in the allegory? Is not the vineyard of the church, the vineyard also of the Lord

¹ See chap. i. 6.

of hosts ? To avoid this, Dr. GILL, who admits them to be the same, supposes these words, ‘ My own vineyard is before me,’ to be the language of the mystic Solomon ; though he is obliged to refer the latter part of the verse, ‘ Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand’ to the spouse. But this division appears to me forced and unnatural, and therefore unjustifiable.

If we must consider these vineyards as distinct, we must, I suppose, with some of the old divines, explain them of the Jewish and Gentile churches ; but I confess I see no necessity for this. Parables and allegories must be taken up only in their outlines : to be minute is to be ridiculous. ‘ The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel,’ and this may be considered in different points of view. It may be compared to Solomon’s vineyard in Baal-hamon, as being let out to keepers ; namely, the Jewish princes, magistrates, and prophets : but when the church speaks of herself under this image, she promises diligence and watchfulness, with a due regard and reward to the attention of her ministers.

The language of the beloved in addressing his spouse, ‘ O thou who inhabitest the gardens,’ evidently refers to her taste, repeatedly hinted at, for rural occupations and retirement, on which we have before remarked : and the concluding verses, which are nearly a repetition of the chorus in the former parts of the Song, express an ardent wish for the accomplishment of the objects

here prefigured in the incarnation of the Son of God. The only idea therefore on which I shall insist, is the allegory of a *vineyard*, as descriptive of the church, which is beautifully drawn by the prophet ISAIAH¹ : this I shall quote in the elegant version of Bp. LOWTH:

- ‘ Let me now sing a song to my beloved,
- ‘ A song of loves concerning his vineyard.
- ‘ My beloved had a vineyard
- ‘ On a high and fruitful hill.
- ‘ And he fenced it round, and he cleared it from the stones,
- ‘ And he planted it with the vine of Sorek ;
- ‘ And he built a tower in the midst of it,
- ‘ And he hewed out also a lake therein :
- ‘ And he expected, that it should bring forth grapes ;
- ‘ But it brought forth poisonous berries.’

The prophet goes on to amplify the allegory, by shewing what pains had been taken with this vineyard, the ill returns which had been made, and the judgments to be expected; and then concludes with the following application :

- ‘ Verily the vineyard of JEHOVAH, God of hosts, is the house of Israel ;
- ‘ And the men of Judah the plant of his delight.’

As a comment upon this, I might refer to the parable of the labourers in the vineyard², which is too long for transcribing in this place, and too easy to need explanation.

I would therefore finish the whole with an echo to the concluding chorus—‘ Make haste,

¹ Chap. v. 1, &c. See also chap. xxvii. 2, &c.

² Matt. xxi. 33, &c.

‘ my beloved ;’ which in the first instance was a wish for the personal appearance of the Messiah, and the introduction of his kingdom ; but may now be adopted with equal propriety, in reference to his second coming, when he shall be admired in ‘ all them that believe ;’ to this event it is our duty and privilege to look forward with joyful expectation, and to adopt the language of the great prophet of the New Testament, and say—‘ Even so ; come, Lord Jesus ! *Amen.*’

THE END.

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